

NY Federal Reserve Bank to be sued

Says Muhith

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will pursue a legal fight to retrieve the fund stolen from its account with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said yesterday.

Muhith's comments came after the US Fed said its systems were not breached.

The Fed cannot deny its obligations, he said while talking to reporters at the secretariat on media reports that hackers had stolen around \$100 million from Bangladesh Bank's foreign currency account with the Fed.

Nothing went wrong on the side of the BB, Muhith said, adding that the problem was with the Fed that handled the account though it had denied the responsibility.

"It can't be that they don't have any responsibility."

Asked about the next course of action, Muhith said, "Of course, we will file a case [against the Fed]. We have kept money with them and they are responsible for it."

Asked if the government will conduct any further investigation, Muhith said the BB was still looking at it.

"I have left it to the BB and it is on top of it."

Wishing anonymity, a deputy governor of the BB said the New York Fed had failed to deal with the hacking threat with due diligence.

However, the Fed denied that its payment system had been breached, according to Reuters.

"To date, there is no evidence of any attempt to penetrate Federal Reserve systems in connection with the payments in question, and there is no evidence that any Fed systems were compromised," said New York Fed spokeswoman Andrea Priest in response to queries about the claim.

The BB has around \$28 billion in foreign currency reserve. Nearly one-third of the reserve is in the form of liquid assets with the Federal Reserve Bank in the US and the Bank of England. The rest is invested in bonds and gold.

The BB has recovered the \$20 million that was transferred online to Sri Lanka, owing to quick correspondence with a foreign bank in Sri Lanka.

Of the remaining \$81 million that ended up in the Philippines, a big portion has been frozen following talks with two foreign banks in the Southeast Asian country.

A BB official said the central bank would be able to recover a big portion of the money.



Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday. The Saudi minister, who arrived in Dhaka in the afternoon on a short visit, left the city at night.

PHOTO: BSS

PM assures

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Hasina thanked Saudi Arabia for regularising Bangladeshi workers.

According to the two leaders, some people in the name of religion have been damaging the true spirit of Islam, a religion of peace and tolerance.

They observed that the extremism should be contained, otherwise it might spread in other places, affecting the image and interests of the Muslim Ummah.

Adel al-Jubeir highly praised Bangladesh's progress and development under the dynamic leadership of Hasina.

Expressing satisfaction over the existing ties between the two countries, he hoped that the relations would be strengthened further in future.

Diplomatic correspondent of The Daily Star adds: The Saudi minister assured the PM of recruiting more Bangladeshi workers. It was emphasised that proper training of the Bangladeshi workers would be beneficial for both the countries.

Hasina briefed the Saudi minister on the investment-friendly environment in Bangladesh and sought more investment from Saudi Arabia.

Adel al-Jubeir arrived in the capital yesterday afternoon on a brief official visit to Bangladesh. He left Dhaka at 9:20pm.

Tigers' World T20

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five intense Asia Cup games including last Sunday's blockbuster final against India.

A long flight the next morning followed by a chilly reception in the evening was something too demanding for any professional team before a serious match, that too after only one practice session and at a venue where the team has never travelled before.

But the first sight of a cool and collected Bangladesh captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza at the Dharamsala media centre after a two-and-a-half hour training session gave the audience some sort of clue about why the Tigers have been overcoming one adversity after another under his stewardship.

"I don't want to buy his [Mahmudullah Riyad's] idea of taking our three qualifying games as build-up for the main event. I'm against anything that is overconfidence. We will play our next game against Holland as intensely as we did against India in the Asia Cup final," said Mashrafe after the briefing.

Mashrafe was actually reflecting on Riyad's comment on arrival at the Kangra airport on Monday, when the on-song batsman said that he wanted

to take the three qualifiers against Holland, Ireland and Nepal as 'practice games for the World Cup'.

With injured pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman still not recovered from a side strain and all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan nursing the bruise he sustained in Sunday's final, Mashrafe said that his team are more concerned about the height in Dharamsala, where breathing is an issue for someone who has just arrived.

"It's a different place. It's not like any other place in India which has the same climate as ours. We are facing a bit of a breathing problem. Besides, it was cold last night and we need some time to adjust to such conditions. Hopefully, we will adjust ourselves quickly and give our best shot tomorrow (today)," said the Tigers skipper.

While reflecting on the gradual improvement in this format, where they were not up to the mark not long ago, Mashrafe said that the Tigers' coach Chandika Hathurusinga has been doing wonders with the team ever since his introduction one-and-a-half years ago.

"I think he is the father-figure of the team. Under him we have not only had a brilliant World Cup [in

2015] but also had three outstanding home series. We have also played very well in the Asia Cup and we now want to carry the momentum here," added a confident captain.

Asked if Mustafizur has any chance to play in the opening game against Holland, the inevitable reply from the captain was, "We are yet to decide the team." But the reality is that the 20-year-old pace sensation will not be able to make it to the playing eleven.

Mashrafe was also against the idea of rearranging the batting order when confronted with the question of promoting Riyad.

"I think Mahmudullah is playing his role very well at the moment. Yes, you can demand the bigger role for him. But imagine our two potent batsmen Shakib and Mushfiqur also coming to the party. Don't you think it will be devastating for any opposing team?" retorted Mashrafe.

True, Bangladesh are now a vastly improved side since their last game against Holland in Hague in April 2012 that they lost, but Mashrafe was not ready to take anything for granted. Perhaps that is because of the format of the game where things change in the matter of an over or two.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

27 Bangladeshi victims rescued in Malaysia

STAR REPORT

Malaysian police in a raid in Taman Sungai Puyu yesterday rescued 27 Bangladeshi men who were victims of human trafficking, reports Malaysian state news agency Bernama.

They also arrested three men believed to be members of a human trafficking syndicate. "The skinny and listless Bangladeshis aged between 20 and 40 were found in two houses that had been padlocked," the report said quoting a police source.

The police took about 30 minutes to break the locks and open the doors, it added.

"We raided the two houses at about 2:00am and found 17 Bangladeshis in one house and 10 in the other," the source told Bernama.

Preliminary investigation showed that the men had been locked up in the

houses by the syndicate for the last two months, it added.

The police source told Bernama that the investigation also showed that the men were each given a *roti canai* a day and tap water to drink and they were beaten up if they tried to escape.

"All the foreigners are believed to have entered the country legally but the syndicate that had promised them jobs locked them up and intended to sell them off to their potential employers," Malaysian police were quoted by Bernama.

Each of them was charged a certain fee to be brought into Malaysia and they were sold off for RM 3,000 each to potential employers, it added.

The three men arrested were in their 30s and were believed to be members of a human trafficking syndicate.

Penang CID chief Datuk Mohd Zakaria Ahmad declined comment when Bernama contacted him.

Death stays for Jamaat's Moneymen

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to jail terms on eight other charges. He later challenged the verdict at the apex court.

It is its verdict, the tribunal observed, "The AB [Al-Badr] members being actively commanded, effectively administered and consciously guided by accused Mir Quasem Ali used to confine those whom they defined as 'miscreants' [freedom fighters] and political or ideological opponents. The accused was thus an indispensable cog in the 'murdering machinery' implanted at Dalim Hotel."

According to the prosecution, Quasem, until November 6, 1971, was president of Chittagong town unit of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

He was made general secretary of East Pakistan Chhatra Sangha on November 6, 1971. He became one of the top leaders of Al-Badr, which was formed with the leaders and activists of Islami Chhatra Sangha.

He went into hiding after the Pakistan occupation forces and their local collaborators surrendered on December 16, 1971. But after the changeover in 1975, he re-emerged and subsequently established himself as a top businessman in Bangladesh.

He was arrested on June 17, 2012, at the office of the daily Naya Diganta, a concern of Diganta Media Corporation, of which he was chairman.

The SC yesterday upheld his death sentence on one charge -- the killing of young freedom fighter Jasim Uddin at Dalim Hotel -- and jail terms on six other charges over his involvement in abduction, confinement and torture of freedom fighters and innocent people.

It, however, acquitted him of the other three charges, including a murder charge for which he was sentenced to death by the ICT-2.

During the appeal hearing last month, the SC bench led by the chief justice raised questions about the performance of the investigators and prosecutors.

Early this month, two ministers came down hard on the chief justice for his comments on the prosecution and investigation teams. One of them even said Quasem's appeal should be reheard by a reconstituted bench,

MIR QASEM'S WAR CRIMES

TRIBUNAL AND SC PUNISHMENT

CHARGE	CRIMES	TRIBUNAL	SUPREME COURT
1	Abduction, confinement and torture of Omarul Islam Chowdhury	Not Guilty	
2	Abduction, confinement and torture of Lutfar Rahman Faruk and Seraj	20-year jail	Upheld
3	Abduction, confinement and torture of Jahangir Alam Chowdhury	7-year jail	Upheld
4	Abduction, confinement and torture of Saifuddin Khan	7-year jail	Acquitted
5	Abduction, confinement and torture of Abdul Jabbar 'Member'	Not Guilty	
6	Abduction, confinement and torture of Harunur Rashid Khan	7-year jail	Acquitted
7	Abduction, confinement and torture of Sanaulla Chowdhury, Habibur Rahman and Elias	7-year jail	Upheld
8	Abduction, confinement and torture of Nurul Quddus, Md Nasir, Nurul Hashem and others	Not Guilty	
9	Abduction, confinement and torture of Sayed Md Jamaluddin and 6 others	7-year jail	Upheld
10	Abduction, confinement and torture of Zakaria, Salahuddin alias Chuttu Miah, Iskandar Alam Chowdhury, Nazim Uddin and many others	7-year jail	Upheld
11	Murder of young freedom fighter Jasim	DEATH	UPHELD
12	Murders of Ranjit Das and Tuntu Sen	DEATH (BY MAJORITY)	Acquitted
13	Abduction, confinement and torture of Sunil Kanti Bardhan	Not Guilty	
14	Abduction, confinement and torture of Nasiruddin Chowdhury	10-year jail	Upheld

keeping the chief justice out of it.

The statements of the two ministers led to speculations about what the verdict would be.

But dispelling all confusion, the five-member SC bench, headed by

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, delivered the short verdict in a packed courtroom at 9:42am amid tight security.

The other four judges are Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, Justice Hasan

Foez Siddique, Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mohammad Bazlur Rahman.

The apex court pronounced the verdict around 40 minutes after the scheduled time, as court officials mistakenly didn't put Quasem's appeal at the top of yesterday's supplementary cause list.

The chief justice reprimanded the officials for the mistake.

Later, the SC delivered the verdict after the appeal was included in the cause list.

Justice seekers, war crimes campaigners and the prosecution were happy with the verdict. People from different walks of life brought out processions and distributed sweetmeats in Chittagong and the capital as well as other parts of the country.

Upset at the verdict, Jamaat called a nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal for today, protesting "the government's conspiracy to kill Quasem through false cases against him".

The convict, who is in the condemned cell of Kashimpur Jail-2 in Gazipur, was informed about the SC verdict. He looked normal. Senior Jail Superintendent of the prison Prasanta Kumar Banik told The Daily Star.

NEXT STEPS

The process of executing Quasem would start after the full verdict is released, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told this newspaper.

But it will be halted if Quasem files a review petition, and he has to do it within 15 days from the date of the verdict's release, said Mahbubey.

Usually, a review appeal is entertained for consideration in case of serious factual mistakes in the verdict or wrongful application of the law, said the chief law officer of the state.

Earlier, five convicts -- Jamaat leaders Abdul Quader Mollah, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, Delwar Hossain Sayeede and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury -- filed review petitions after the release of full verdicts.

Of them, Quader Mollah, Kamaruzzaman, Mojaheed and Salauddin were executed after their review petitions were rejected.

A review petition of Sayeede, whose death sentence was commuted to jail

until death by the SC, is now pending with the SC.

The apex court on January 6 this year upheld the death sentence of Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami for war crimes, but the full verdict is yet to be released.

Yesterday, the attorney general expressed satisfaction over the SC judgment. "We have got the desired verdict," he told reporters at his office.

Law Minister Anisul Huq was also happy with the SC judgment.

"If Mir Quasem Ali does not file a review petition, the SC verdict will be executed," he told The Daily Star.

Coordinator of ICT's Investigation Agency Abdul Hannan Khan and its Co-coordinator Sanaul Huq, and ICT Prosecutor Tureen Afroz were also satisfied with the verdict.

Meanwhile, Quasem's principal lawyer Khandker Mahbub Hossain said history would judge the verdict that upheld the death penalty of his client.

"As a lawyer, I have to accept this verdict," he told journalists at his office.

Mahbub said they would decide on filing a review petition with the SC after receiving the full verdict.

Quasem's family claimed that the Jamaat leader was convicted on "weak evidence and deposition" in the war crimes case.

"It has been proved through the chief justice's comments at the appeal hearing in the war crimes case," Quasem's wife Khondker Ayesa Khatoon said in an email to The Daily Star.

"Therefore, there is no legal basis for upholding the death penalty for him," she added.

Appeals of 10 war crimes convicts are now pending with the top court. The convicts include Jamaat leaders ATM Azharul Islam and Abdus Subhan, expelled Awami League leader in Brahmanbaria Mobarak Hossain, state minister of the HM Ershad-led government Syed Mohammad Qaisar.

Besides, the government filed an appeal, seeking death penalty for former Jatiya Party lawmaker Abdul Jabbar, who was sentenced to imprisonment until death by the ICT-1.

Bodies of 2 girls found hanging from tree

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Bodies of two adolescent girls were found hanging from a tree in a remote village in Rangamati yesterday.

Police could not immediately say whether they committed suicide or were murdered.

The dead, Moina Akhtar and Nur Banu, were class-VII students at a local school and were neighbours. They hailed from Chaityatoli under Bhashanya Adam union of Longodu upazila in the district.

Police and locals said the girls returned home from schools yesterday afternoon and went out leaving their books home.

Later, their bodies were found hanging from the tree, some 25 yards off their homes, with their own scarves, they said.

Moina's 10-year-old brother Masud was the first to see the bodies. He informed locals and police about the incident.

Sheikh Farid, member of ward-7 of Bhashanya Adam Union Parishad, said it seemed the girls committed suicide but could not tell why they would do that.

Moina's father Hazrat Ali said he had no idea why the girls, who used to be so playful and happy, would take their own lives.

Sub-Inspector Jafar Ahmed of Longodu Police Station said he visited the scene yesterday evening and could not immediately say whether the girls committed suicide or were murdered.

MH370 remains a mystery

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Investigators probing what happened to flight MH370 yesterday said the cause of the plane's disappearance remained a mystery as the second anniversary passed with devastated next-of-kin still grasping for answers.

The Malaysia-led international team of aviation experts set up to investigate issued an annual progress report but the brief statement had no new insights on what caused the Malaysia Airlines jet to vanish.