

Citycell CEO arrested over loan scam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday arrested Mehboob Chowdhury, chief executive officer of Citycell (Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd), for allegedly embezzling over Tk 383 crore of AB Bank between 2011 and 2015.

An ACC team led by its Deputy Director SK Abdus Salam arrested Mehboob from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday afternoon after he flew into Dhaka from Sri Lanka.

The ACC on Wednesday sued former foreign minister M Morshed Khan, his wife Nasrin Khan and 14 others for allegedly embezzling the money.

Morshed is the chairman and Nasrin is a director of Pacific Bangladesh Telecom Ltd (PBITL). The other accused include PBITL Vice Chairman Asghar Karim, CEO Mehboob Chowdhury, three former managing directors of AB Bank Kaiser Ahmed Chowdhury, Shamim Ahmed Chowdhury, M Fazlur Rahman, and current MD of the bank Moshirur Rahman Chowdhury. The remaining accused are officials of the bank.

Mehboob was kept at Banani Police Station and will be produced before a court today, said ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya.

According to the case statement, AB Bank unlawfully guaranteed loans of Tk 348.5 crore given to PBITL by eight other banks and non-bank financial institutions. The board and other top officials of AB Bank approved the move without taking any collateral from PBITL, in violation of the rules and regulations of Bangladesh Bank.

GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



It was a day full of mourning as people from all walks of life slowly made their way to the grounds of the Holy Artisan Bakery yesterday. An eerie silence engulfed Road 79 in the capital's Gulshan while all paid tributes to the 22 souls killed in an unprecedented terror attack on July 1 last year. Clockwise from top left, Sammilita Sangskritik Jote holds a peace rally at Central Shaheed Minar. In tears, many lit candles at a makeshift altar at the Shaheed Minar's pedestal. Teachers and students of Rajshahi Government College organise a rally commemorating Faraz Ayaaz Hossain on the college premises. Locals and staff of the Beaconing Light Organisation of Mankind and Society (BLOOMS) school bring out a procession in Katigram village of Manikganj in memory of Mohammad Rabiul Karim, an assistant commissioner of the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. People gather on the café premises to pay their tributes. Flowers adorn the makeshift memorial in front of the Bakery. PHOTO: STAR

Secularism a far cry

Cultural activists tell peace rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultural activists yesterday at a rally in the capital called upon the countrymen to build a country of religious harmony defying militant threats.

The country is making progress in different sectors but the dream of a secular country, which was a promise of the Liberation War, still remains a far cry, they said.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote (SSJ), a leading platform of the country's cultural activists, organised the "Shanti Shomabesh" (peace rally) at the Central Shaheed Minar, commemorating deadly terror attack at Holy Artisan Bakery in the capital's Gulshan on July 1 last year.

The organisers held a candle light vigil and observed a one-minute silence to pay respect to the victims who include a number of foreign nationals.

Pointing to the recurrence of militant attacks in the name of religion all over the world, Liberation War Museum Trustee and war crimes researcher Mofidul Hoque said it is time to stand against any form of barbarism in the name of religion.

Eminent cultural personality Nasiruddin Yousuff said the July 1 militant attack at the upscale eatery in the city's heart of Gulshan area shook up the countrymen and sur-

prised the world. The cultural activists denounce the militant attack and firmly stand against militancy, he added.

Theatre personality Ramendu Majumdar said the spirit of Faraz Ayaaz Hossain, a young victim who refused to leave Holy Artisan without his friends and subsequently got killed, is the true spirit of Bangladesh.

Hoping that youths like Faraz will lead the country in future, he urged the government to declare July 1 as "Jongbad Protirodh Dibosh".

Noted actor and director Mamunur Rashid said political forces have to understand that making any compromise with radical groups may turn to be suicidal in future.

Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor said when Bangladesh is making progress in different sectors and moving towards prosperity, communal forces are busy holding back the country in different ways.

"...the society is changing secretly," he said, stressing the need for unearthing the reasons behind the changes.

Poet Asad Chowdhury, veteran actor ATM Shamsuzzaman, theatre personality Ataur Rahman and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Vice-Chancellor Prof Kamrul Hasan Khan, among others, spoke at the rally presided over by SSJ President Golam Kuddus.

Govt strongly fought back home-grown terrorists

But it doesn't want to be complacent, says Shahriar Alam

UNB, Dhaka

The government does not want to be complacent about its achievements despite its success in preventing home-grown militants from carrying out attacks similar to the one on Holy Artisan Bakery over the past one year, said State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam. He made the remark while speaking to the news agency, ahead of the first anniversary of the country's deadliest militant attack incident that shocked the international community.

Confidence of foreigners have boosted after Bangladesh fought back "strongly" against the "home-grown militants" since the attack on July 1 last year, he also said.

A group of youth with sophisticated arms stormed the Holy Artisan Bakery at the capital's Gulshan diplomatic zone on that day, killing 20 hostages, mostly foreign nationals including Italian and Japanese. Two police officials were also killed during the 12-hour standoff.

"The overall sense of security has improved. I hope this [improved] situation will prevail. I must add that we aren't complacent," Shahriar said.

"...There has been a significant progress over the last one year and there has been no such attack in Bangladesh which is a success in terms of dealing with home-grown militants."

"Diplomats are no longer worried about security issues like [they did in] the past as we've

introduced various procedures on security aspects. All required steps are taken as per their desire for ensuring their safety. We've given them permission to stay in constant touch with police beyond Diplomatic Security Zone," Shahriar Alam said.

A foreign national living in Bangladesh said he arrived in Dhaka about two months after the attack on July 1 last year.

"It was very strange not to see any foreigner at all on the streets and not [being] able to walk around town ourselves. It's been almost a year since then and I'm personally so happy to see more and more foreigners in public areas and on rickshaws and CNGs," he told the news agency wishing to remain unnamed.

"I'm happy to see the improvement at the level of professionalism of Bangladesh security forces," said another foreign national.

Swiss Ambassador to Bangladesh Christian Fotsch lauded Bangladesh's efforts in fighting against this common global problem and advised that the government should also address the root causes of violent extremism and terrorism.

Moreover, the government should respect human rights and should not allow "extrajudicial killings" during its fight against terrorism. "Otherwise, it'll be counterproductive," he also said.

"Now, I feel very safe in Dhaka and in Bangladesh. I feel comfortable. But it's important to think about the security not only for

foreigners, but also for all citizens in the country," said the ambassador ahead of the July 1 attack anniversary.

Darryl Lau, who recently completed his nearly six years' tenure as the Consul General at the Singapore Consulate in Dhaka, said the issue of terrorism and extremism is an issue faced by many countries and the solution to this lies on closer and enhanced cooperation.

"In this regard, I'm happy to share that there has been very strong linkages between our intelligence and security wings," said the diplomat.

He laid emphasis on preventing people from being misguided, saying that families and children (of the terrorists or terror suspects) should be given proper care, rather than abandoning them.

During his recent visit to Japan, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam expressed his deepest condolences for the lives of Japanese citizens lost in Dhaka on July 1 and informed his Japanese counterpart of various measures taken by Bangladesh to combat terrorism.

Referring to his meeting with Nobuo Kishi, a senior official of Japan foreign ministry, he said Kishi assured that Japan is ready to assist Bangladesh in all possible means to fight terrorism.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan on Wednesday said investigators were taking time to submit the charge-sheet in the Holy Artisan attack case as they want it to be flawless.



FH Arif, governor of Rotary International Bangladesh District 3281, speaks at a press conference at the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday. The event was organised on the occasion of 2017-18 Rotary year launch. The organisation announced various programmes at the event including starting ambulance services for the poor and creating awareness against drug abuse. Former governor Salim Reza, Safina Rahman, Ghulam Mustafa, SAM Showkat Hossain and Chairman of Rotary Media Committee Abul Khair Chowdhury were present. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Landslides dent Rangamati tourism

UNB, Rangamati

The tourism business in Rangamati has been hit hard by the recent landslides as the numbers of tourists went down drastically in the district during the Eid vacation.

Only a handful of people are now visiting the hilly district due to damaged roads and fears of further landslides amid sporadic rains.

Hotel owners, loom artists, boat owners are in deep financial trouble due to absence of tourists in the district.

Around 145 points of Rangamati-Chittagong road were damaged by the landslides that struck the district on June 13, halting the road communication between the two districts.

A 100-metre portion of the road at Shalban totally collapsed.

Bangladesh Army and the Road Transport and Highways Division constructed an alternative link road at the point which was opened to light vehicles a few days back.

However, it will take another month to make the road fit for heavy vehicles, keeping the tourists from all over the country away from the district.

Every year, hotel rooms are usually booked much before the start of any Eid vacation, but the scenario is totally different this time.

Swapan Shil, manager of Hotel Hill Park in the district town, said there are 57 hotels. "But all the hotels are lying empty as there's no tourist due to the landslides."

Drivers of tourist boats are also passing their days in miseries as they have no work, said Ramjan Ali, general secretary of Tourist Water Transport Boat Owners' Association.