

DU students hold counter programmes

Students of Dhaka University's mass communication and journalism department yesterday formed a human chain on the campus, protesting Tuesday's attack on some agitating students by Chhatra League activists. Meanwhile, leaders and activists of the pro-ruling party student body formed another human chain in the TSC area of the university, demanding punishment to those who "attacked" the vice chancellor and damaged university properties. They also wanted the "attackers" to be expelled from the university.

Covering their mouths with black cloth, around 80 students of the journalism department joined the human chain in front of Aparajeyo Bangla.

After the demonstration, Fahmidul

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Covering their mouths with black cloth, students of Dhaka University's Department of Mass Communication and Journalism form a human chain in front of Aparajeyo Bangla on the campus yesterday, protesting Chhatra League's attack on some agitating students on Tuesday. Right, BCL activists under the banner of Dhaka Bishwabidyalay Sachetan Shikharthirinda form another human chain in TSC area, demanding punishment to those who "attacked" the vice-chancellor and damaged university's properties.



Abduction bid by fake DB men foiled

A crowd yesterday foiled an attempted abduction by four people who identified themselves as detectives and tried to whisk a man in a microbus at Moghbazar in the capital.

The criminals equipped with handcuffs and a walkie-talkie forced a man into the vehicle around 10:30am near Moghbazar intersection, soon after he had come out of a bank withdrawing around Tk 7 lakh, police said, quoting witnesses.

As the victim cried for help and started kicking on the window glasses of the vehicle in a desperate effort to get free, locals started chasing the microbus, which got stuck in traffic several hundred metres away.

All the four criminals managed to flee before the locals rescued the victim and smashed the microbus with BRTA registration number -- Dhaka Metro Cha--139551.

Law enforcers also could not identify the abductors and the owner of the vehicle immediately. "We will try to

find out the owner taking information from the BRTA," said Maruf Hossain Sorder, deputy commissioner (Ramna division) of police.

Some documents, handcuffs and the walkie-talkie were recovered from the microbus, said police, adding that the criminals impersonating members of Detective Branch (DB) of police were abducting the victim.

"It seemed like a scene from a movie. Some people were whisking a man who kept on shouting asking for help," said Moteleb Hossain, a witness who is a roadside fruit vendor.

The way the man was picked up resembles many mugging incidents carried out by criminals posing as detectives and in some cases by law enforcers themselves.

An assistant sub-inspector of police and one of his accomplices were caught red-handed while trying to "mug" a trader in Dhaka's Khamarbari area on October 17 last year.

On November 10 last year, some policemen led by a sub-inspector of

SEE PAGE 13 COL 3

Suu Kyi

FROM PAGE 1

A Myanmar government spokesman hit back yesterday, accusing the former New Mexico Governor Richardson of overstepping the mark in his stinging resignation letter.

"He should review himself over his personal attack against our State Counsellor," government spokesman Zaw Htay told AFP, referring to Suu Kyi's official title.

"We understand his emotion about the two Reuters correspondents. However, he needs to understand, rather than blame the Myanmar nation and the State Counsellor."

Zaw Htay said the issue of the arrests was beyond Richardson's mandate and he should not have brought it up at his meeting with Suu Kyi.

The heated discussion left Myanmar's leader "quivering" with rage, Richardson told the New York Times.

"If she had been a little closer to me, she might have hit me, she was so furious," the paper quoted Richardson as saying.

The Reuters journalists, Myanmar nationals Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, face a possible 14 years in prison under the Official Secrets Act for allegedly possessing classified documents that

they say were given to them by two policemen.

They are waiting to hear whether they will be granted bail in a protracted case that could take months to even reach trial.

They had been reporting on the crisis in Rakhine, where Myanmar troops are accused of waging a vicious ethnic cleansing campaign against the Rohingya.

Nearly 690,000 Rohingya have fled the brutal military operation for Bangladesh since last August, bringing with them consistent testimony of murder, rape and arson at the hands of troops and vigilante mobs.

Some 300 more families have crossed the border in recent days after several houses were burned down in Buthidaung township, said Chris Lewa from the Arakan Project, a monitoring group that closely tracks Rakhine.

Richardson also has harsh words for the head of the panel, former Thai deputy prime minister Surakiart Sathirathai.

The board chairman, he said, was not "genuinely committed" to implementing recommendations regarding the issues of Rohingya safety, citizenship, peace, stability and development.

No marketing

FROM PAGE 1

Atomic Energy Centre and the Institute of Public Health (IPH) in the capital over the last one month.

Seven of those were local firms and the rest foreign companies, he said.

"Lead was found in milk powder of the foreign companies as well but within the permissible level," Mahub said.

He, however, declined to name the brands whose products contained excessive lead, arguing that disclosure of their names may create panic among people.

"We will soon sit with the six companies and see how to address the problem."

The official further said the BFSA is taking the contamination of milk powder seriously against the backdrop of a recent scandal involving French company Lactalis. Salmonella, a type of bacteria, has been found in baby formula manufactured by Lactalis which has ordered recall of its products from Bangladesh and 82 other countries.

In a letter to the customs authorities yesterday, BFSA Secretary Dr Md Khaled Hussain asked the commissioners of all customs houses under the National Board of Revenue to ensure that all types of imported milk powder are checked at the import level.

"Upon release from ports, every batch

of imported milk powder has to be stocked in the importers' own warehouses until results of lead tests are provided by the laboratories concerned," the letter said.

For testing milk powder, the BFSA designated three laboratories of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Atomic Energy Centre and the IPH.

Prior to the release of consignments from the customs, the importers have to sign affidavits, declaring they will not market milk powder before samples of the products are tested for lead.

The importers then have to send copies of the affidavits and the test results to the BFSA.

"Based on that, the authority [the BFSA] will either allow or disallow marketing of the products," said Mahub.

As per the Safe Food Act 2013, all stakeholders concerned are obliged to cooperate with the BFSA or they will face legal action, he added.

Dr Tahmeed of the icddr,b said it is essential to ensure that milk powder is safe, especially because it has serious nutritional impacts on child health.

"The authorities also need to be careful that there is no crisis of milk powder in the domestic market," he told The Daily Star.

Tigers crumble to 10-wkt loss

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh batsman, hit a slog sweep off Lakshan Sandakan straight into the safe hands of Upul Tharanga at long on to confirm Bangladesh's ninth-lowest ODI total.

There was a reason for the former Tigers mentor to be delighted with the big win after an embarrassing 163-run loss against the home side, especially as it took them to the final, but it would not be wise for Bangladesh to identify the demon solely in Hathurusingha's inside knowledge of his former charges, or his qualities as a good tactician, as evidenced by the bouncer play that dispatched Mahmudullah Riyad yesterday.

There was also no scope to raise the finger towards a pitch that produced variable bounce and pace, but examining the manner of the dismissals of the batsmen will reveal the main reason behind that batting blues and the middle-order's inability to show character after the failure to deliver of the two stalwarts Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan.

The previous match against Zimbabwe, when Bangladesh lost their last eight wickets for 114 runs, was a portent of the middle-order blues but

the fatal crack was found in yesterday's match.

It is not certain whether the home team was complacent after their place in the final was secured, but the application of the batsmen was pathetic and that was only exacerbated by the fact that Suranga Lakmal, who tormented the Bangladesh top order with three wickets, Thisara Perera and Dushmantha Chameera were sharp and intense in their efforts while executing the plans formed by the shrewd Hathurusingha.

Anamul Haque got an inside edge off Lakmal into his stumps in the third over, which once again put the onus on Tamim and Shakib but an electric piece of fielding from Danushka Gunathilaka saw Shakib several feet short of the crease after Tamim pushed a ball square on the off side, and that was when the mayhem began.

Tamim was soon to follow his partner when he was unable to manage a bouncer from Lakmal as he fended the ball behind square on the off side and it was another spectacular effort from Gunathilaka to dive and complete a catch that he tracked down from backward point.

The Shakib-Tamim departure set a

platform for the rest to prove that the team were not heavily dependent on them and that they have the depth to make up for their loss, but Lakmal bounced out Mahmudullah as the right-hander picked out Chameera at fine leg, the only man on the leg side. Sabbir Rahman irresponsibly hoisted Thisara to mid-on. Abul Hasan, who came into the team in place of Sunzamul Islam, then edged Thisara to the wicketkeeper before Mushfiqur Rahim, the highest scorer with 26 runs, bunted a slower from Chameera to short midwicket. The struggling Nasir Hossain chased a short and wide delivery from Chameera to be caught behind.

One cannot take anything away from the good bowling effort of Sri Lanka, especially the way they executed their dressing room plans, but the Tigers had their own problems that contributed to the debacle.

The poor showing also handed all the momentum to Sri Lanka who, unlike Bangladesh, have the experience of winning tournament finals. The onus now is on Bangladesh to prove that it was just a bad day, but they will not be able to do that without solving a growing crisis in the middle order.

Khaleda's first graft trial ends

FROM PAGE 1

as per the constitution Khaleda would be disqualified from contesting any election if she is sentenced to a minimum of three years' imprisonment.

Talking to The Daily Star, Khaleda's lawyer Zainul Abedin said, "This is what the government wants [disqualifying the BNP chief from contesting polls]. There is no ingredient in the case to convict her of graft."

THE CASE

The Anti-Corruption Commission had filed the graft case with Ramna Police Station in July 2008, accusing Khaleda and five others of misappropriating over Tk 2.1 crore that had come from a foreign bank as grants for orphans.

According to the case document, then (1991-1996) prime minister Khaleda Zia opened an account named "Prime Minister's Orphanage Trust" with the Ramna branch of Sonali Bank.

On June 9, 1991, \$126,000 (Tk 4,44,81,216) was deposited in the account from United Saudi Commercial Bank, but the money was not spent for any orphanage in between June 9 and September 5 of the same year, it said.

The Zia Orphanage Trust was set up by Khaleda's two sons and a nephew. It was registered on September 5, 1993.

A total of Tk 2,33,33,500 was given to the trust on November 13, 1993, to establish an orphanage in Bogra, reads the FIR.

The money was deposited in the Trust account on November 15 that year and Tk 4 lakh was withdrawn from it on December 4, the FIR stated.

Later, the money was transferred to the accounts of two other accused -- then BNP lawmaker Kazi Salimul Haque and businessman Sharfuddin Ahmed.

According to the prosecution, the amir of Kuwait in 1991 had sent the money to prime minister's orphanage fund, which is a public fund.

But the money was transferred to Zia Orphanage Trust, a private fund, and the accused misappropriated the money by transferring the amount from a public fund to a private one, it said.

The defence counsels, however, said Kuwait had sent \$126,000 to a private fund to build an orphanage in memory of late president Ziaur Rahman.

But the prosecution submitted "forged documents" to make the private fund appear as a public fund under the Prime Minister's Office only to implicate and harass Khaleda for "political purposes", they told the court.

Of the accused, Khaleda is now on bail while Salimul Haque and Sharfuddin are behind bars. Tarique, also the senior vice-chairman of BNP, Ziaur Rahman's nephew Mominur

Rahman and former principal secretary Kamal Uddin Siddique have been absconding.

The court received the case in July 2008 and completed the proceedings in 236 working days, according to the prosecution.

YESTERDAY'S PROCEEDINGS

As the court began the proceedings around 11:07am, Ahsan Ullah, a defence counsel for Sharfuddin and Saleemul Huq, placed his arguments on legal points citing several decisions of High Court and Supreme Court.

Syed Mizanur Rahman, another counsel for Saleemul, placed his arguments on legal points for over an hour.

He said the prosecution alleged that the accused had destroyed/hid some original documents regarding money

Mosharraf said the defence counsels had challenged the FIR, cognisance order and the charge-framing order of the case with the High Court and Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and even sought quashment of the case.

But all their petitions were rejected by the higher courts which directed the trial court to dispose of the case on the basis of evidence, he said.

"We have produced 32 witnesses," he said, adding that the defence lawyers placed the same arguments before this court and the higher courts.

After his submissions, Khaleda's another lawyer Abdur Rezaq Khan made a brief submission before the court.

BNP-AL REACTIONS

The BNP is considering taking to the streets if the verdict in the orphanage trust case goes against Khaleda Zia, according to party sources.

Senior party leaders on different occasions had threatened that they would announce tougher programmes if the verdict went against the party chief.

They have been alleging that the government was trying to keep Khaleda away from politics and that's why it filed the "politically motivated" case.

"The case has no merit. There is no scope of giving any verdict that goes against the BNP chairperson. So we are expecting a positive and fair justice," BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir expressed fear that the verdicts in the two graft cases against Khaleda and the other accused would be pronounced "as per the prime minister's desire".

"Prime Minister's Special Envoy HM Ershad has said Khaleda Zia will have to go to jail within a few days. It means that this illegal government has already written the verdict. So it was unnecessary to stage the farce in the name of trial," he said.

Meanwhile, the ruling Awami League is mulling to follow "act according to the demand of the situation" strategy over the verdict in the case.

The party will make a decision in this regard after seeing its arch-rival BNP's reaction. The AL will be on alert on August 8, the day of the verdict delivery, to avert any unwarranted situation.

Talking to this newspaper, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the government and the law enforcers would not allow anyone to get involved in destructive politics.

"If the BNP leaders and activists take the path of violence, the law enforcers will face them with an iron hand."

KHALEDA ZIA ENTANGLED IN CASES	
Total case	32
Argument in Zia charitable graft case to begin Jan 30	
Charge-sheet submitted another	19 cases
Hearing on charge framing	6 cases
Charge framing hearing stayed by HC	11 cases
Under Investigation	11 cases
Types of cases GRAFT, ARSON, DEFAMATION, SEDITION	
Gatco, Niko, Zia orphanage and Boropukuria coal mine cases filed during past caretaker govt rule; the rest during the AL govt tenure since 2009	

transactions and therefore submitted "photocopies" of the documents.

But the prosecution did not bring charges against the accused for destroying or hiding documents, meaning the prosecution itself does not believe that the documents were destroyed, he said.

Citing a relevant section of the law, Mizanur said mere expenditures or withdrawals of money do not constitute any offence; had there been any dishonest intention behind transactions of money, it would have constituted an offence.

He said Zia Orphanage Trust entrusted Saleemul with the money and although the money was in his account, he never withdrew it for his personal use.

Refuting the defence arguments, PP

Money is there, money is not

FROM PAGE 1

order to lend cheap, they had to offer low rates on deposits too. The discouraged depositors found other places to park their money -- government savings instruments and leasing companies offering higher rates. Many of them even siphoned off capital abroad.

Correspondingly, deposit growth declined to about 11 percent in October last year (the latest figure not available) from 13.13 percent in December 2016.

And now banks are scrambling to puff up their deposit by offering interest-rate as high as 9 percent.

Another factor came into play here. Many of their borrowers defaulted on or started delaying repayment. So the banks' cash flow management went haywire. Their receivables could not be realised on time, leading to deposit crisis. We see a spiraling of default loan increased to 10.67 percent in September last year against 9.23 percent a year before. Some Tk 15,000 crore worth of large loans were restructured in 2015 and most of these loans have fallen classified again.

Added to this was the Bangladesh

Bank's set rules of lending. A bank has to maintain a certain advance-deposit ratio (ADR). It cannot lend above a certain percentage of its deposit amount. When this thing was happening, the ADR was 85 percent. The banks had already over-lent themselves without increasing deposit, straining their future lending capacity. To this was added the defaulted loans because any loan not paid in due time was added to the banks' asset column, making their ADR even worse.

Now all this has led to the current situation where the banks have become cash strapped despite having so much of excess liquidity in the system. They cannot lend as much as they want from their available deposit because they have to keep this money in till to maintain their asset-deposit ratio.

And now to contain inching inflation, the Bangladesh Bank is about to apply its monetary tool of cutting ADR to make even less money available to banks to lend. This will reduce money supply and curb inflation.

The banking system is also being gripped by other international factors as well -- the rising commodity prices is

just one. Oil price has already been climbing steadily and reached \$70 a barrel. Cotton price has started rising from last week too and India has already cancelled some big contracts.

So the pressure on dollar has increased, and following the simple economic thumb rule dollar has become pricier. This means importers now need more cash to buy dollar for the same amount of commodity. Since banks are their source of money, the banks are also under pressure to supply more money.

The mega projects are also adding more pressure on dollar as their import components are huge. Capital machinery import has increased by about 37 percent. Sugar, rice, wheat and cotton imports have risen also quite significantly.

All this have led to a new stress on the banking system that would ultimately roll into the economy as well.

AK Azad, former FBCCI president, expressed the fear that higher lending rate might interrupt investment and harm employment. He thinks the high irregularities in the banks have led to the current situation where genuine businessmen will be punished.