

Who is BB fooling?

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The group had taken out Tk 2,686 crore with fake documents from Sonali Bank in collusion with officials. Another about a thousand crore taka was embezzled in similar fashion by five other companies.
The story of BASIC Bank, one of the best in Bangladesh, is known to all. From a very success story, that too in public sector, the bank took a nose dive as over Tk 4,000 crore were robbed from it through all kinds of irregularities. That the bank was being defrauded was known to all, it was in the air, and in several media reports including in The Daily Star only the Bangladesh Bank remained silent until the whole robbing process was complete.
Bismillah Group had done in five banks by embezzling Tk 1,100 crore and nothing has happened after that.
And then there was the scam of Crescent and AnonTex involving more than Tk 8,000 crore; and the list goes on. There is the case of how cash incentives were taken out with fake documents with the central bank officials' collusion.
And then there was the scam at Farmers' bank, a new entrant. Its chairman Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir stepped down as a result of the Tk 500 crore scam. But matters ended there as if a mere resignation settles the issue.
The central bank is also in a quandary about what to do with the large loans restructured as a special case. Many of these loans have defaulted

and rescheduled again and again.
Actually, the lack of governance has led to spiking of non-performing loans (NPL) to 10.41 percent in June, a very high and unsustainable level, from 9.21 in 2009 when the government came to power. This is despite massive write-off of loans.
And all these have taken toll on the borrowers and general shareholders. Banks' cost of fund had gone up leading to a high interest rate regime.
In the stock market, at least five of the banks are trading below their face values and five others just at face value. Earning per share of the banks has dropped dramatically, some by 10 times.
The hollowed-out state-owned banks needed capital to survive and we the taxpayers were compelled to fork out crores.
From fiscal 2005-06 to 2016-17, they received Tk 10,272 crore in capital support. In other words, we gave the money to the cheats and swindlers.
And yet capital shortfall at the banks stood around Tk 22,000 crore in March this year.
The central bank also showed its lack of independence when applying its monetary tools. At the insistence of the bank owners who faced liquidity crunch, the central bank reduced requirement of the banks to keep cash with the central bank by one percentage point. This was no independent conscious decision of the Bangladesh Bank as it should have been.
Defying the market force, the bank

owners in return promised that they would reduce lending rate to single digits, something that did not happen yet.
While things were in such a mess, there were talks of bank merger. Even the finance minister had said some smaller banks should get merged with the big ones. That did not happen though, after all bank mergers are done to make banks stronger and not weaker. A strong bank with some lacking in one area merges with another strong bank to make up the deficiency. Why should a strong bank snap up a sick bank? It makes no economic sense.
And just as an oxymoron, the Bangladesh Bank is mulling giving licences to four more banks just on political diktat. With 57 commercial banks in place, Bangladesh has the second highest number of banks second only to Ukraine within the GDP bracket of \$114 billion and \$198 billion.
There are many more holes showing glaringly in the Bangladesh Bank that need to be plugged standing on a sound assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. A mere back-patting report that serves no other purpose than the political one will not help the case. The Bangladesh Bank is the regulator but as it seems it is turning a blind eye to all irregularities. Being the custodian of banks, it holds all responsibilities if anything bad happens to the banking sector. Its ostrich policy will not exonerate it from the blame.

India won't

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Swaraj, responding to questions, emphasised that though ministers Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Hardeep Singh Puri were attending the Kartarpur event in Lahore, it should not be seen in the context of dialogue that has been suspended between the countries since 2013.
"See, bilateral dialogues and Kartarpur (pilgrims) corridor are two different things. And I am very happy that for the last 20 years, rather many years, India has been asking for the Kartarpur corridor and for the first time, Pakistan responded positively to this. But it doesn't mean that the bilateral dialogue will start only on this.
"The bilateral talks always say that terror and talks can't go together. The moment Pakistan stops terrorist activities in India, the dialogue can start. But the dialogue is not only connected with Kartarpur corridor," she said.
The last Saarc summit was held in Kathmandu in November 2014 but the Islamabad summit in November 2016 had to be scrapped after India refused to take part in the event following attacks by Pakistan-based terrorists on an Indian Air Force base and an army camp in Indian states of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.
The two incidents left 27 Indian defence personnel dead.
Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Bhutan also declined to attend the 2016 Saarc summit which has not been held till date as official engagements between India and Pakistan remains on hold.

Khoka, three others jailed

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cancelled bail for the three. Arrest warrants were also issued for them.
After cross-examining all 10 prosecution witnesses, Judge Mizanur Rahman Khan, special judge for Dhaka division, handed down the sentence.
The punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the judge said in the judgment.
Khoka, also a BNP leader who is currently in London for treatment, was shown fugitive in the case.
On February 15, 2012, Mahbubul Alam, assistant director of the Anti-Corruption Commission, filed the case with Shahbagh police against the four for misappropriating Tk 26 lakh from public funds and causing a

loss of another Tk 11 lakh to it.
According to the ACC official, Khoka in collusion with the trio pocketed Tk 26,14,900, which they had collected in parking charges from the market between 2003 and 2011.
Khoka also caused a loss of Tk 11.05 lakh to the public exchequer by cancelling tenders for the parking lot in 2003 and 2005. The cancellation of the tender was a violation of the Dhaka City Corporation rules.
ACC Deputy Director Nur Hossain Khan pressed charges against the four on November 7, 2012.
On October 20, 2015, Khoka was given 13 years' imprisonment in another case filed for amassing wealth illegally and concealing wealth statement to the ACC.

A city father who left his mark

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Annis in his usual courtesy picked the call even in the midst of the virulent situation: "I will remove this truck stand, no matter what. They think they can intimidate me? I will show them what I can do."
And he showed. The truck stand was removed, opening a route that helped ease traffic movement on the east-west direction to some extent.
He was a visionary and thought a lot about traffic congestion. "We need more public transport," he would often say, adding it was to be done "at any cost."
His proto model started in Gulshan-Banani area with Dhaka Chaka, a circular bus service, that gave a big relief to commuters and also removed the chaos and rage that ran high owing to a number of transport owners. Bringing the bus service under one umbrella removed all that.
And he wanted to introduce 4,000 buses in the city. Sadly, he could not and with his death the project has moved at a snail's pace.
Huq assumed office on May 6, 2015, and remained the leader for two-and-a-half years, which was only half of his term. His demise cast a spell of sadness on his co-workers who shed tears remembering the colourful personality.
"All creative work came to a standstill after his death. Now the DNCC is continuing with routine works and trying to finish the half-done works," said Councillor (ward-11) Dewan Abdul Mannan.
"[Annisul] Huq could motivate and engage everyone. He was like a banyan tree and now we feel that we do not have any guardian," Mannan went on.
"It is unfortunate that we had a mayor like Annisul for such a short period of time. He changed our neigh-

bourhood with dynamic development work," said Fatima Urmee, a resident of Mirpur-12.
Tushar Ahmed, a resident of South Kafrul, said there was a time when they could not stand around Taltola Bus Stand as 10 garbage containers used to be haphazardly placed on the busy street.
"Like a magician, he [Annisul Huq] acquired a parcel of land in Parad Square nearby and set up a transfer station there. Now the road remains clean," he told this paper.
Huq set up around 50 secondary transfer stations across DNCC to improve garbage management. He took various steps to turn the city greener, cleaner and free of traffic congestion.
His works resulted in removal of unauthorised billboards, discontinuation of illegal car parking at bus stands in G ab t o l i , M o h a m m a d p u r , Mohakhali and Kalyanpur areas.
DNCC planted trees on the median strip of Tejgaon's Satrasta road and renovated a public toilet by it. Now commuters are no longer afraid to use the road, which not so long ago was frequented by drug peddlers.
Some truckers, however, are seen parking their vehicles on the road these days.
Apart from his signature work "Dhaka Chaka", Huq deployed authorised rickshaws in Gulshan, Banani, and Niketon. He took initiative to construct 23 U-loops from Satrasta to Joydebpur, Gazipur for smooth passing of traffic but the project could not proceed much following his demise. Now a revised project for constructing 11 U-loops is awaiting the planning commission's approval.
The tech-savvy mayor wanted to reach city dwellers through a mobile

app, said Iqbal Habib, joint secretary at Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA).
"He planned to launch the app through which citizens could lodge their complaints with DNCC," he said adding that the app developed by Bangladesh University was now out of use.
Huq sent proposals for projects similar to the Hatirjheel: Jalnisharga at Diabari mouja, Kalyanpur Water Park comprising Kalyanpur Ka, Kha, Ga and Cha canals and water bus service connecting Hatirjheel, Norai khal and Balu river.
An initial plan was sent to the Prime Minister's Office but it did not proceed after Huq's death.
Huq managed to move relevant organisations to recover the city's canals but things were stalled after he fell ill. The late mayor worked with several organisations to promote roof gardening, said a DNCC official.
He had a target to plant 500,000 trees within his tenure but could plant around 70,000, he said.
Huq employed consultants to modernise 24 parks in Dhaka and approved designs of three parks: two in Banani and one in Mohammadpur, according to Iqbal. Despite delay, the modernisation work was going on, said the BAPA official.
Annisul worked to construct new roads, modernise footpaths, and develop a proper drainage system in Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara areas. He ensured the pavements remained free of illegal occupation.
He started a Tk 1,026 crore project to build new roads, footpaths and drains in others areas including Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Pragati Sarani, Karwan Bazar and Rampura. The works are undergoing at present.

Robot Furhat

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situations people are more comfortable opening up and talking about difficult issues with a robot than with a human," said Samer Al Moubayed, chief executive of Furhat Robotics.
That's because a robot's personality can mirror the personality of the person interacting with it and because people don't feel judged, he added.
The robot has been used in Frankfurt airport as a multi-lingual concierge, helping travellers find their way, but also for customer services training - simulating irate shoppers for example.
Science and technology firm Merck and Furhat Robotics yesterday unveiled a robot in Stockholm which will ask people about their health and lifestyle and screen them for risk of diabetes, alcoholism and hypothyroidism. If necessary, the robot will advise them to go for a blood test or to a doctor.
"Every robot needs a different personality depending on the job it's going to do," said Moubayed.
Furhat can be male or female, old or young, wisecracking or serious.
"One of the barriers that robots have had ... is the issue with expressivity - being able to move like us, (with) very smooth, very expressive facial movements, eye movements, head movements," said Moubayed.

No observer this time

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therefore do not represent in any way the view of the European Parliament or the European Union."
The statement was issued by MEPs David McAllister and Linda McAvan. The EU Delegation to Bangladesh also issued the same statement yesterday.
The EP stated its position on the election in its resolution of November 15, 2018. It hoped that the December 30 polls would be "peaceful, transparent and participatory so that citizens can express a genuine political choice".
The EP called upon the political forces to refrain from any violence or instigation of violence during the electoral period.
The EU last month informed the Bangladesh Election Commission that it would not send its full-fledged election observer mission. It said only two "electoral experts" would be deployed.
As per that decision, electoral experts David Noel Ward and Eirini-Maria Gounari arrived in Bangladesh on Tuesday. The two will be staying here till January 15 next year.
Asked why the European Parliament decided not to observe the national election, which would be participated by all political parties, EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Rensje Teerink said the European Parliament sends a very small number of observers only when the EU deploys a fully-fledged observation mission.
"As this time the EU does not send an

Election Observer Mission; the European Parliament is not sending observers. From the EU side, we see a growing demand from partner countries to have an EU Election Observer Mission. In the context of constrained resources, the EU has to make a difficult choice on where to deploy," she told The Daily Star.
Earlier, the EU had cancelled sending election observer missions to Bangladesh in 2006 when the election was postponed amid violence and anarchy, and in 2014 when more than half of the 300 parliamentary seats were won uncontested.
EU AMBASSADOR MEETS ECs
"We hope a good contest and free and fair election will be held," Ambassador Rensje Teerink told reporters after meeting the election commissioners at the Nirbachan Bhaban yesterday.
Teerink was accompanied by the two electoral experts of the EU. The experts, David Noel Ward and Eirini-Maria Gounari, arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday to monitor the situation before and after the national election.
"We had a good meeting with the CEC and his colleagues," she told reporters.
EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed at another briefing said the expert team expressed satisfaction over the atmosphere.

A case of sheer negligence

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reports on the morning of April 4, he raised the alarm and asked what could be the possible consequences of it.
Dr Nazmul brushed off his concerns although the patient was growing "paranoid, highly disoriented, agitated and would be talking continuously for hours", reads the complaint.
On April 8, Mazkura started having movement disorders. Dr Nazmul was shown "the increased twitching of the mouth and tremors at both hands" but he said such symptoms were common for someone suffering high electrolyte imbalance. Mazkura also complained that she felt like her hands were entangled in spider webs.
But the physician suggested that the patient should be released immediately because long stay at the hospital "generally leads to pneumonia", according to the complaint made to

the BMDC.
As the patient's condition did not improve even after a week since release, Mazkura's family took her to Samitivej Hospital in Bangkok where they got to know that she had suffered Central Pontine Myelinolysis. The condition, in which brain cells are damaged, was caused by the rapid medical correction of sodium deficiency at United.
The BMDC investigation team came up with similar observations.
Quoting the Bangkok doctors, Ayub told The Daily Star in July this year that "feelings like spider webs" occur when nerve cells are damaged. Ayub, chairman of Rabab Group, described the negligence of Dr Nazmul as "a criminal offence".
"The doctor did not pay heed to her complains and symptoms. The damages could have been worse if treat-

ment abroad was not started soon," added the victim's husband.
In its report, the probe body found the doctor's inefficiency, unscientific way of treatment, and violations of standard protocol responsible for Mazruka's prolonged sufferings.
On November 1, BMDC suspended Nazmul's registration for six months citing his "inefficiency and negligence in treating Mazkura".
Ayub and his family view the penalty as insufficient. Once an active personality, Mazkura is now limited to her house and the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed, Ayub said.
"She might take a year to recover but may not get back to where she was," he said, adding that eventually the deficits would affect her psychologically. The situation will eventually affect me and other family members the same way."

JP's Salma

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Ruhul Amin Hawlader, secretary general of JP, said around 200 party aspirants submitted nomination papers before the nomination submission ended yesterday.
About JP chief HM Ershad's hospitalisation, Ruhul Amin said, "Our chairman is now fine and healthy. He has been admitted to CMH [Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka] for regular health check-ups and will return home within a day or two."
About Ershad's involvement in the "nomination business," Ruhul Amin said a vested quarter was spreading propaganda against the party.
"Such allegation is totally baseless and false," he added.

'Full-scale war' looms

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Russian border patrol boats fired on, boarded and seized the three Ukrainian vessels, along with 24 sailors, on Sunday off the coast of Crimea.
The Ukrainian vessels -- a tug and two gunboats -- were trying to pass through the Kerch Strait from the Black Sea to the Azov Sea, but were refused access and chased into international waters by 10 Russian vessels.
Putin yesterday said Russia's border guards were "fulfilling their military duty" when they seized the ships.
MILITARY BUILD-UP
Poroshenko said on Tuesday that the number of Russian units near the border with Ukraine had "grown dramatically", with a threefold increase in the number of Russian tanks.
The Ukrainian parliament on Monday voted in favour of Poroshenko's request for martial law, which gives authorities the power to mobilise citizens with military experience, regulate the media and restrict public rallies in affected areas.
It was unclear how it would be applied in the border areas and Poroshenko has suggested it is meant essentially as a preventative measure.
The prospect of martial law had already led to the relocation of a football match scheduled for today between Arsenal and Ukrainian side FC Vorskla to Kiev from the city of Poltava, even though Poltava is not in one of the affected regions.
DEFENCE SYSTEMS DEPLOYED
Sunday's incident was the first major confrontation at sea in the long-running conflict pitting Ukraine against Moscow and Russian-backed separatists in the country's east.
It has raised fears of a wider escalation -- in a conflict that has killed more than 10,000 people since 2014 -- and prompted international calls for restraint.
Russian military officials said yesterday that Moscow would soon deploy more of its advanced S-400 air defence systems in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014.
One more of the systems would be joining three others already deployed in Crimea, they said.
Kiev has angrily demanded the return of its ships and the release of its sailors, but on Tuesday a court in Crimea ordered 12 of them to be held in pre-trial detention for two months.
Three hospitalised sailors were also formally detained for two months. The rest were to appear in court yesterday.
PUTIN-TRUMP TALKS
Western governments have rallied behind Kiev in the dispute, accusing Russia of illegally blocking access to the Sea of Azov and of taking military action without justification.

The European Union, Britain, Canada, France, Germany and others expressed support for Kiev on Monday, in statements pro-Kremlin newspaper Izvestia denounced as "predictably anti-Russian".
Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov yesterday said he expected the meeting with Trump to go ahead.
"The preparations are continuing. The meeting is agreed. We don't have any different information from our American colleagues," Peskov said during a daily briefing.
Putin spoke by telephone with Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Kremlin said.
It said the two discussed security in the Black Sea "in the context of the dangerous incident provoked by authorities in Kiev".
Erdogan also spoke with Poroshenko, the Ukrainian leader's office said, to discuss "Russia's brazen act of aggression".

US urges UN to hold off on Yemen resolution

AFP, United Nations
The United States on Tuesday told the UN Security Council that a draft resolution demanding a truce in Yemen should be put on hold until peace talks are held in Sweden in early December.
Britain presented the measure last week as the United Nations stepped up its diplomatic efforts to hold talks ending the war in Yemen.

Backing up families

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Meanwhile, the missing BNP leader M Ilias Ali's wife Tahsina Rushdir Luna and their son Abrar Ilias Arnob filed nomination papers for Sylhet-2.
However, in Dhaka, Mirza Abbas, BNP standing committee member, and his wife Afroza Abbas, president of the Mohila Dal central committee, filed nomination papers for Dhaka-8 and Dhaka-9 respectively.
TOP LEADERS' NOMINATIONS
Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, JP

leader Raushan Ershad and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir have all been nominated to contest the 11th parliamentary polls.
Hasina would vie for Rangpur-6 and Gopalganj-3 seats; Khaleda for Bogura-6, Bogura-7 and Feni-1; Ershad for Dhaka-17 and Rangpur-3; Raushan for Mymensingh-4 and Mymensingh-6; and Fakhrul for Thakurgaon-1 and Bogura-6.
According to electoral rules, an individual can submit nomination papers for a maximum of three parliamentary seats.

Do not vote

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can be secured if there is London-based connection. I urged the people of Chittagong-1 [Mirsharai] constituency to reject BNP-Jamaat as well as my father," he continued.
Elite told The Daily Star that he had affiliation with AL since his student life and sought nomination from Chattogram-1, but the party has nominated veteran politician Mosharraf Hossain.
"I will do everything possible to ensure the victory of successful Housing and Public Works Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain," he said, adding that his speech would have been the same if any other person was contesting the polls from BNP from the constituency.
Talking to The Daily Star, Monirul Islam Yousuf said activities of his son were his political affairs. He is engaged with AL, so he can urge the people not to vote for a BNP-nominated candidate.
"I am taking it normally as everyone has their right to seek vote for their party-nominated candidates," he said, adding, there were no family or personal matters in it.

4 killed

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Monir, 44, and his helper Abdur Rahim, 22.
Police officials, fire service officials and local witnesses said a passenger bus coming from Koikhal of Feni was crossing the rail gate near Sharshadi Bazar. At the same time a Mymensingh Express train, heading to Mymensingh from Chattogram, was crossing the same rail gate when it collided with the bus. The bus was thrown yards away due to impact. Four people died on the spot.
On information, Feni's fire service and a police team rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies and rescued the injured with the help of locals.
The bodies and three of the injured were sent to Feni Sadar Hospital, while Monir was sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital in critical condition.
Resident Medical Officer (RMO) of Feni Sadar Hospital Abu Taher confirmed the four deaths.
Feni Railway Station Master Md Mahbubur Rahman said after the accident train movement on one line remained suspended for one hour.

Dr Kamal

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Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Subrata Chowdhury, executive president of the Gonoforum, mentioned that Dr Kamal had earlier said he "forged the alliance to revive democracy in the country, not to go to power".
Subrata also said he submitted his nomination papers to the returning officer for contesting the December 30 election for Dhaka-6.