

## BASIC BANK Two held over embezzlement of Tk 75.66cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday arrested two people in a case filed over misappropriation of about Tk 75.66 crore from the state-run BASIC Bank.

The ACC arrested former officer of BASIC Bank Mohammad Hemayet Uddin Talukdar, 45, and Managing Director of Techno Design and Development Kamal Hossain Selim, 46 from capital's Segunbagicha area.

According to the case statement, a tripartite contract was signed between Techno Design and Development Ltd, Advanced Development Technologies Ltd and BASIC Bank on September 17, 2012.

As per the contract, Advanced Development would mortgage its 240 flats to BASIC Bank for a loan worth Tk 80 crore. Advanced development would then transfer the money to Techno.

The loan was sanctioned at BASIC Bank's 314th meeting of board of directors on August 29, 2012.

Breaching the terms of the contract, the money was not given to Advanced Development. Kamal, in collusion with bank officials, withdrew about Tk 75.66 crore out of the sanctioned Tk 80 crore between and March 10, 2013 and June 17, 2013.

Following the incident, senior manager of Advanced Development

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## Mob beats 65-year-old man to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A 65-year-old man was beaten to death by what police said was a group of villagers in Rajshahi's Bagmara yesterday.

Ibrahim, who was a resident of Kamarbari area of the upazila, was declared dead minutes after he was taken to a hospital around 3:00pm, said Nasim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Bagmara Police Station.

His body bore marks of torture, he said.

On Monday, two cows of farmer Atikur Rahman of Kalupara village were allegedly stolen, he said.

Atikur and his brother Shariful Islam suspected that Ibrahim had stolen the cow, he added.

Atikur, Shariful and some of their cohorts forcibly picked Ibrahim up from his village home yesterday afternoon and took him to Atikur's house and beat him up, said the OC.

Ibrahim's wife Reshma said she followed her husband and his captors to Atikur's house.

"I saw some people beating my husband up with iron rods and sticks," she told The Daily Star.

She said Atikur's men took Ibrahim to the upazila health complex after he lost consciousness due to beating.

"Some of the men hit him with their shoes even as he was being taken to the hospital," she said.

Police arrested Majnu, 38, and Majnu, 26, after the grieving woman filed a case accusing nine named and ten unnamed persons.

Police said Atikur went into hiding.

## 103 agencies

FROM PAGE 16

Star, Anisur Rahman, secretary at religious affairs ministry, said the Bangladesh Hajj Council office, during investigation, found that around 103 hajj agencies were involved in irregularities in arranging accommodations and transportation.

According to the hajj policy, the agencies will have to maintain a certain quality while arranging accommodation, which also cannot go further than a certain distance from the Kaaba, for the pilgrims, sources at the ministry said.

If the accommodation is five to six kilometers away from the Kaaba Sharif, the respective agencies will have to provide transportation, added the source.

The Bangladesh Hajj Council office in Saudi Arabia found that at least 103 agencies didn't provide any transportation for pilgrims although they rented hotels for them that were five to six kilometers away from the Kaaba Sharif.

In the show-cause notice issued on April 4, the ministry said legal actions would be taken if those agencies make poor arrangements and rent hotels far away from the Kaaba Sharif this year.

Even before, many hajj agencies used to promise to arrange better accommodation and food for intended pilgrims. They also used to promise pilgrims to keep them near Kaaba Sharif.

In both cases, the promises were not kept by most of the agencies as they were more interested to make money than to serve the pilgrims, Sheikh Mohammad Yasin, who performed hajj last year, told The Daily Star.



A crane placing a span of the Padma bridge on two pillars off Munshiganj's Mawa. The picture was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FARHANA MIRZA

## Jute fibre shows huge potential

FROM PAGE 1

wheel covers, and backs of seats using natural fibres like flax (linen), hemp, kenaf (mesta), and jute.

The company also makes fibres and linen threads for the clothing, furnishing, transport, filtration, sports, and leisure industries and for domestic use.

Karim said his company buys around 1,400 tonnes of jute from Bangladesh every year.

"We are investing more to add value to jute. Although we usually use flax to make the interiors of vehicles, flax is expensive than jute," he said.

The price of flax is €1.1 per kilo whereas a kilo of jute costs €1, he added.

Touted as the "golden fibre" of Bangladesh, jute is one of the cheapest and the strongest natural fibres and considered as the fibre of the future,

industry insiders said.

The lightweight fibre is increasingly making its way into composite makers for use in cars. In recent years, major global automakers have started using jute-based composites.

The car makers used to use fibre-glass to make interiors before. But fibreglass is not recyclable or biodegradable, so in the mid 90's the search for a green alternative began. Jute emerged as the frontrunner.

Bangladesh started supplying jute to high-end car makers like BMW, Mercedes-Benz, and VW in the early 2000s, according to Bangladeshi jute exporters.

The global car industry needs approximately 80,000 to 100,000 tonnes of natural fibres a year, of which 10,000 to 12,000 tonnes of jute are supplied by

Bangladesh, said Mushtaq Hussain, managing director of Golden Fibres Trade Centre, a leading jute exporter.

When asked about the French company's interest in joint venture, he said, "It would be a good initiative ... It would add more value to jute."

Mushtaq, also a member of Bangladesh Jute Goods Exporters Association, said if any foreign company makes jute fibre-based components here in Bangladesh instead of buying raw jute, it would help generate more revenue.

However, Karim said, "If things go well, we may go for a joint venture in Bangladesh. But it is still at the planning stage."

There are many opportunities to transform jute fibre into diverse export products and expand its market globally.

"The future of jute is very good. We need more innovations here," Karim said.

Jute industry was once the lifeblood of the country's economy but it lost the glory days since the 80's. By the late 2000s, production reached around 9.9 lakh tonnes.

Recently there has been some hope. In 2017-18 fiscal year, jute production was about 19.6 lakh tonnes from 7.58 lakh hectares.

The top executive of NatUp Fibres thinks this is high time for the country to tap into the potential of jute.

He suggested reorganising the sector and investing more on production.

The growers were not getting the benefits due to middlemen at different layers. "They [the farmers] are poor and work very hard... We need to

## Five lakh yaba pills seized in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Bangladesh Coast Guard has seized 500,000 yaba pills and held two men from the mouth of the river Ramnabad on the Bay of Bengal in Patuakhali.

Lt Commander Najiur Rahman, staff officer for the coast guard of Nizampur station, yesterday said they detained the duo -- Mosharef Hossain, 35, and Tipu Sikder, 32, both from the district's Kalapara upazila -- on Tuesday and handed them over to Mohipur Police Station.

Two trawlers, allegedly used for operating yaba trade in the area, were also seized, he added.

Saidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Mohipur Police Station, said they received the accused and kept them in police custody.

A case has been filed with the police station in this connection, he said, adding, "We would place them [Mosharef and Tipu] before court tomorrow."

According to coast guard sources, Tipu went to Teknaf by a fishing trawler - FB Alauddin -- to bring the consignment of yaba pills. When he was returning, the engine of the trawler went out of order.

Then, a group of drug dealers was going to the Bay to take away the consignment when coast guards conducted a raid on their trawler and detained Mosharef. Later, on his information, they detained Tipu, the sources further said, adding that rest of the criminals managed to flee the scene.

## Sylhet Gas

FROM PAGE 16

resting in his room as he returned after seeing off his colleagues.

Shah Alam added that they called the caretaker again around 10:30am and he told them that Lutfar was not responding from his bedroom.

He said they then rushed to the quarters and informed police, who brought down the hanging body of Lutfar from the ceiling fan.

Mahbubul Alam, additional superintendent of Sylhet police, said Lutfar might have taken his own life. They would tell the cause of his death after getting the autopsy report, he said.

He added that they got a suicide note.

In the note, Lutfar neither mentions any reason for his "suicide" nor holds anybody responsible for his death, the official added.

## MPO

FROM PAGE 1

MPO is the government's share in the payroll of non-government educational institutions. Under the scheme, the government gives 100 percent basic salaries to the teachers of non-government schools. The teachers also get a small amount a month as allowances through the scheme.

"There are some obstacles. Considering the financial aspect, we need to look into whether we can bring all the eligible institutions under the MPO scheme.

"We want all the eligible institutions to come under the scheme at one go," the minister said.

More than 4 lakh teachers and employees of 26,340 secondary schools, colleges, madrasas and technical institutes are getting the MPO benefits at present.

After a suspension by a BNP-led government for around six years, the MPO scheme was revived by the Awami League-led government which brought 1,624 secondary and higher secondary schools and colleges under the scheme.

But since then, no new school has been brought under the MPO.

Several thousand teachers and employees of government-recognised educational institutions have long been demanding for resumption of the MPO facilities.

UNIFORM ADMISSION TEST

At the meeting, the education minister said she was in favour of introducing a uniform admission test to public universities.

"I know that some universities, especially the major ones, oppose the plan for various reasons. But the uniform entrance test is very important for students and guardians," said Dipu Moni.

Under the system, admission seekers will be enrolled at universities based on the merit list prepared from a single test. For example, students would take one test for a place in any of the science and technology universities and another test for a place in any of the agriculture universities.

This would exempt the admission seekers from time, costs and travels required to take separate admission tests at different public universities across the country. At present, only the medical colleges have a uniform entrance test.

The education ministry in 2010 decided in principle to introduce a uniform admission system, also known as cluster system.

## Nusrat loses battle for life

FROM PAGE 1

Only a few minutes before the Alim exams on April 6, four unidentified persons allegedly took Nusrat to the rooftop of the three-storey administrative building of the madrasa, saying one of her friends was being assaulted there, Nusrat's brother Mahmudul Hasan Noman had told this newspaper earlier.

Then they doused her with kerosene and set her on fire, he said.

Talking to this correspondent last night, Dr Samanta said, "We tried our best. The prime minister communicated with us round-the-clock. If there were even a little possibility for sending her to Singapore, we would have done that."

"Her body will be kept at the morgue for autopsy," he added.

Meanwhile, the officer-in-charge of Sonagazi Model Police Station in Feni was withdrawn for his alleged negligence in handling the case over setting the madrasa girl on fire.

In another development, a Feni court placed madrasa principal Siraj, the main suspect in the case, on a seven-day remand.

Two other accused -- Absar Uddin, a lecturer in English at the madrasa, and

Ariful Islam, an Alim examinee -- were also remanded for five days each.

Feni Senior Judicial Magistrate Saraf Uddin Ahmed passed the order after police produced the three before him.

The court will hear today a police prayer for placing another accused, Alim student Zubayer Ahmed, on a seven-day remand.

Law enforcers arrested Zubayer and a niece of the madrasa principal on Tuesday night over their alleged links to the incident.

So far police have arrested nine people in the case.

A REPEAT OFFENDER?

Siraj had earlier faced allegations of sexual harassment and had been sued for cheque forgery, vandalism and arson. He was arrested in the cases but got released after securing bail from court.

Locals and a number of staffers and students at the madrasa said no one at the institution dared to say anything against Siraj, an expelled Jamaat-e-Islami leader, who was backed by a section of local influential leaders.

An allegation of certificate forgery was brought against him after he joined the madrasa in 2000. But he managed to overcome it, using his political clout.

In October last year, a female student filed a complaint of sexual harassment against the principal with Additional Deputy Commissioner (revenue) AKM Enamul Karim, also president of the madrasa governing body. The complaint was withdrawn later.

Last year, a case was filed against Siraj over a Tk 1.39 crore-cheque forgery. He landed in jail in the case but got released, securing bail from court.

Earlier, two cases were filed against him on charges of vandalism and arson in Feni during political unrest in 2014. He was arrested and sent to jail. He was later released on bail in both the cases.

Talking to this newspaper, a number of students and staffers at the madrasa said the principal allowed some outsiders to stay in the dormitory, and used them as his henchmen.

They staged demonstration in support of him after his arrest in the sexual harassment case filed by Nusrat's mother on March 27.

OC WITHDRAWN

Moazzem Hossain, OC of Sonagazi Model Police Station, was attached to the Armed Police Battalion (APBN) yesterday, said SM Jahangir Sarker, superintendent of police in Feni.

## First ever black hole image released

FROM PAGE 16

"It's a distance that we could have barely imagined," Frederic Gueth, an astronomer at France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) and co-author of studies detailing the findings, told AFP.

Most speculation had centred on the other candidate targeted by the Event Horizon Telescope -- Sagittarius A\*, the black hole at the centre of our

own galaxy, the Milky Way.

By comparison, Sag A\* is only 26,000 light years from Earth.

Locking down an image of M87's supermassive black hole at such distance is comparable to photographing a pebble on the Moon.

European Space Agency astrophysicist Paul McNamara called it an "outstanding technical achievement".

It was also a team effort.

"Instead of constructing a giant telescope that would collapse under its own weight, we combined many observatories," Michael Bremer, an astronomer at the Institute for Millimetric Radio Astronomy (IRAM) in Grenoble, told AFP.

Over several days in April 2017, eight radio telescopes in Hawaii, Arizona, Spain, Mexico, Chile, and the

South Pole zeroed in on Sag A\* and M87.

Knit together "like fragments of a giant mirror," in Bremer's words, they formed a virtual observatory some 12,000 kilometres across -- roughly the diameter of Earth.

In the end, M87 was more photogenic. Like a fidgety child, Sag A\* was too "active" to capture a clear picture, the researchers said.

## Research can help keep up GDP growth

FROM PAGE 1

while Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology Ministry Ruhul Haque spoke at the programme as the special guest.

Hasina said scientists and researchers have huge responsibilities towards the nation. "You will discharge your duties [properly] ... so that future generations can take the country forward," she said.

The prime minister mentioned that the government was formulat-

ing National ICT Policy 2018 to ensure the use of science and technology in every sphere of life. Research works are being emphasised for that reason.

She said Bangladesh gained a huge maritime area and research was essential to explore the potentials from its maritime boundary.

"We have already set up an institute in Cox's Bazar while studies are being conducted at Dhaka and Chittagong universities. We need a large-scale research," she said.

'WON'T LAG BEHIND'

The prime minister said the country needed more scientists, technologists and researchers.

She mentioned that the government had awarded fellowships worth Tk 84.64 crore from 2009-10 to 2017-18 fiscal to 13,713 persons.

"We are providing fellowships worth Tk 17.68 crore in the current fiscal year," she said.

Hasina urged the searchers and scientists to identify possible areas where the government could invest for

development.

Earlier, she handed over the fellowships and cheques of the grants for special researches to the post-doctoral students and researchers.

The prime minister said Bangladesh sent a satellite to space. She noted that more research was needed as the country would send more satellites in future.

"We have to do some research on the issue. We will never lag behind," she said. "This is our aim and we are working hard for it."