

GRAFT CASE

Seven ex-officials of Sonali Bank jailed for 17 years

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced seven former officials of Sonali Bank Limited, including its former managing director, and two others to 17 years jail in a case filed over embezzling of Tk 27.50 lakh.

The convicts are Sonali Bank's former managing director Humayun Kabir, deputy managing director Mainul Haque, general manager Nomi Gopal Nath, deputy general managers Sheikh Altaf Hossain and Sofiz Uddin Ahmed, and assistant general managers Saiful Hasan and Kamrul Hossain Khan.

Two other convicts are Saiful Islam Raza, managing director of Paragon Knit Composite Ltd, a sister concern of Hallmark Group, and one of its directors Abdullah Al Mamun.

Judge Mohammad Iqbal Hossain of the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka handed down the sentence in presence of five convicts.

Mainul, Altaf, Sofiz Uddin and Kamrul were present at the court, while five others, including Humayun were absent.

The judge fined them Tk 27.50 lakh, which they will have to pay proportionately.

The punishment of fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender, the judge said in his judgment.

The judge also cancelled bail of four convicts, now on bail, and sent them to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj with conviction warrant.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



On the rare occasions when nature and greeneries become obstacles to modern amenities in the urban spaces, human intervention becomes inevitable. Yesterday, this electrician was seen cutting the expanded tree branches and leaves that fell on the high-voltage electric wires to prevent any unwanted accident. The photo was taken in Paribagh.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Duping students, parents over stipend 3 held for stealing money, pretending to be edu board staff, says CID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

During the pandemic, fraudsters identifying themselves as education board staff, pocketed a significant amount of money from students and guardians through mobile financial services (MFS).

They did this by calling and texting unassuming victims, and telling them that their stipend has been paid. Then the criminals convinced them to give codes of MFS accounts. Many have lost a hefty amount of money by falling into the trap.

Tracing the fraudulent activities, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) claimed to have arrested three people from the capital's Matuail and Faridpur on Wednesday. The arrestees are Ashikur Rahman, the ringleader, Saiful Sardar and Moktar Hossain.

Speaking at a press conference at CID headquarters yesterday, Special Superintendent of Police Mukta Dhar said stipends were suspended during the pandemic, and fraudsters exploited the situation.

Regarding the method, Mukta said a gang member first takes pictures of the list of customers at an agent's shop. He then sends the picture to another member.

The second person's job is to collect the target MFS account's pin code. Fraudsters gain credibility by calling and talking to students and parents, after sending official-looking messages. At one stage of the conversation, the victims give away PIN and verification codes. Another gang member would then use the codes to make transactions, effectively stealing the money.

The CID official said the team leader cashed out the money and distributed it among each member.

They did this by calling and texting unassuming victims, and telling them that their stipend has been paid. Then the criminals convinced them to give codes of MFS accounts.

'Identify shortcomings, strengthen capacity'

Speakers urge govt at seminar on human trafficking

When you have a cross-border problem and challenge like trafficking, you need a cross-border solution. The EU is willing to work together among its member states as well as in the wider world in this regard.

Charles Whiteley
EU Head of Delegation in Bangladesh

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Multilateral cooperation
- Identify policy shortcomings
- Develop capacity
- Take holistic approach towards trafficking

Bangladesh needs to identify the current shortcomings in the policies and strategies countering human trafficking and migrant smuggling to effectively deal with the menacing crimes.

Kazi Imtiaz Hossain
BISS Chairperson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh needs to find out the shortcomings in its policies and strengthen its capacity to prevent human trafficking and migrant smuggling, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

Besides, multilateral cooperation among countries facing challenges in this regard needs to be strengthened to properly address the issue, they added.

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised the hybrid seminar on "Promoting Multilateral Cooperation to Prevent Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling" on its premises in the capital.

The event was parallelly hosted on virtual platforms Zoom and Facebook.

Chairing the event's inaugural session, BISS Chairperson Ambassador Kazi Imtiaz Hossain said Bangladesh needs to identify the current shortcomings in the policies and strategies countering human trafficking and migrant smuggling to effectively deal with the menacing crimes.

He said the issue of trafficking in persons (TIP) has to be looked at holistically and evaluate the efficacy of current policy frameworks and strategies in this regard.

Addressing the working session, Obaidul Haque, associate professor of international relations at Dhaka University, said Bangladesh needs to focus on developing its capacity to prevent such crimes.

Lack of dependable data is a challenge in this regard, he said.

Asif Munier, a migration and displacement specialist, stressed that international actors need to come forward to prevent human trafficking and migrant smuggling since those are transnational crimes.

In her presentation, Beneka Ferdousi of BISS said the number of Bangladeshis being trafficked and smuggled ranged from 3,000 to 30,000 annually.

Addressing the seminar's inaugural ceremony as chief guest, Charles Whiteley, ambassador and head of Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh, said preventing human trafficking is an issue of great interest to the EU.

"When you have a cross-border problem and challenge like trafficking, you need a cross-border solution," he said.

The EU is willing to work together among its member states as well as in the wider world in this regard, he added.

Preventing trafficking is the key. However, it's not as easy as it sounds because there are many difficult political issues, he said.

Moderating the working session, migration expert Prof Tasneem Siddiqui said there is a "thin line" between human trafficking and migrant smuggling as well as labour trafficking.

BISS Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Maksudur Rahman, among others, spoke at the event.

Bodies of two youths recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered bodies of two youths from a house in Dhaka's Kamrangirchar area yesterday morning.

The deceased are Miraj (20) and his friend Rubel (18). On information, police rushed to a house in Koylar Ghat area and found them motionless, said Aniruddha Roy, sub-inspector of Kamrangirchar Police Station.

Rubel was already dead while Miraj seemed alive. He was rushed to DMCH where doctors declared him dead, the SI said. "Both of the bodies had signs of vomiting. We primarily suspected they ate or drank something and died of poisoning. We will investigate the incident."

Ainal Hawlader, an uncle of Miraj, said his nephew -- worker at a local plastic factory -- was alone in the house when his parents went to their village home in Munshiganj on Tuesday.

He did not know details about Rubel.

US resumes 'Fullbright Program'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US yesterday resumed its "Fulbright Program" that was suspended following the 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery attack.

US Ambassador Peter Haas announced its resumption and also jointly launched the "Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE)", a Department of State global initiative, with Brac University at an event on its premises.

The objective of AWE-BRACU initiative is to promote small and medium enterprise (SME) and fostering local women entrepreneurs, especially from underprivileged backgrounds.

This is the first time a Bangladeshi university will be conducting such a programme through which 50 women entrepreneurs will have access to mentorship opportunities with successful business owners as trainees to understand the practical challenges on the ground. US Fulbright Specialist Dr Sharon Hart, Brac University Board of Trustees Tamara Hasan Abed, Brac Vice Chancellor Prof Vincent Chang, Prof Sang H Lee, Prof Matin Saad Abdullah, and Prof Mohammad Mujibul Haque also spoke.

Public toilet at each ward: Taposh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) will ensure at least one public toilet in all of its 75 wards to meet the long-standing demand of Dhaka city dwellers.

Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said this while inaugurating a public toilet at Janpath crossing yesterday.

Responding to ensuring facilities for the homeless, the mayor said they have a shelter for them, which is now occupied by law enforcers. "We have requested them to vacate the place."

Election to Bar Council held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The election to Bangladesh Bar Council, a statutory body regulating the country's lawyers, was held yesterday in order to elect 14 executive members.

Votes were cast at 79 centres across the country and the results of the election will be announced on May 24, said Md Rafiqul Islam, secretary of the council. He said over 50,000 lawyers are registered with the council. A total of 58 lawyers contested in the election.

PRAYER
TIMING
MAY 26

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-05	12-45	5-00	6-40	8-00
Jamaat	4-40	1-15	5-15	6-45	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Only 19pc house helps have MFS accounts: survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only 19 percent of the female house helps in Dhaka's Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Gorahan, Keraniganj, and Kamrangirchar surveyed have Mobile Financial Service (MFS) accounts, revealed a study.

Around 36 percent of them, however, said they do not use the transaction service, according to the baseline survey report shared at an event in the capital's CIRDAP, organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

Institute of Social Business (ISB) surveyed 250 female house helps and female employers each for the study as part of the MJF's project titled "SHUCHONA -- Introducing Digital Financial Systems (DFS): Empowering Domestic Workers".

Supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the project will be completed by April 2023.

According to the study, each female house help earns around Tk 3,940 from their work and Tk 1,195 from other sources monthly. They spent almost the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Speakers at a findings sharing meeting on "Informal Domestic Workers in DFS" at CIRDAP in Dhaka yesterday. The event was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation.

PHOTO: STAR