



Ex-minister, allies took out Tk 2,000cr from UCB

Bank's chairman states in a letter to ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Genex Infosys Chairman Mohammed Adnan Imam has secured loans amounting to about Tk 2,000 crore from United Commercial Bank through a series of irregularities and manipulations with assistance from former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, according to the bank's current chairman.

Between 2018 and 2024, Saifuzzaman, despite his official position as a cabinet minister, is said to have orchestrated a takeover of UCB by placing his family members and associates in key positions, according to the complaint filed by the UCB Chairman Sharif Zahir on November 11 to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Saifuzzaman's wife, Rukhmila Zaman, was made the chairman of the bank's board, while his brother Anisuzzaman Chowdhury took

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Syrians who live in Turkey wait in a queue at the Cilvegözü cross-border gate before entering Syria at Reyhanlı district in Hatay yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Burden of 40yrs finally lifted

SC clears Harendranath, 79, of embezzlement charges, orders Sonali Bank to pay Tk 20 lakh

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Harendranath Chandra, a 79-year-old man, has finally received justice after a gruelling four-decade legal battle. Falsely accused of embezzling funds from Sonali Bank, Harendranath endured years of hardship, including imprisonment and financial ruin.

In 1985, Sonali Bank initiated a departmental proceeding and filed three cases against Harendranath and eight others, alleging the misappropriation of Tk 16.16 lakh. This accusation eventually led to the loss of Harendranath's job and a five-year prison sentence.

Over the past four decades, Harendranath has tirelessly fought to clear his name. Yesterday, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court upheld a lower court judgement, acquitting him of all charges and ordering Sonali Bank to pay him Tk 20 lakh as compensation for legal expenditures.

The bank authorities have been directed to pay this amount within three months of receiving the order.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Justice Md Ashfaque Islam also dismissed a leave to appeal petition filed by Sonali Bank Limited challenging the HC verdict.

"I was forced to sell my home and land to fund my legal defence... Now, at the age of 79, I am homeless and destitute."

Harendranath Chandra



According to the case documents, Harendranath, a BA graduate, began his career at Sonali Bank in Dhaka as a cashier-cum-clerk on December 31, 1979. After three years, he was promoted to senior cashier-cum-clerk and subsequently transferred to the Jatrabari branch.

During his time at Jatrabari, a remittance of Tk 16.16 lakh was transferred to the Motijheel branch his branch. The receiving branch officer acknowledged the full amount in writing, complete with their seal and signature. However, a few days later in 1985, an internal bank investigation revealed that the funds were missing.

In late 1985, Sonali Bank initiated departmental proceedings and filed three cases against nine individuals, including Harendranath, accusing them of embezzling the missing funds.

The ordeal has taken a severe toll on Harendranath's life. "I was forced to sell my home and land to fund my legal defence. To support my family, I worked as a ticket seller at a bus stand for nearly 15 years. Now, at the age of 79, I am homeless and destitute," Harendranath lamented.

Seeking payment of all due salaries and benefits from Sonali Bank, Harendranath has also filed a writ petition with the High Court, which is pending trial.

Barrister Md Omar Farouq, Harendranath's legal representative, expressed disappointment at the bank's persistent pursuit of the case, even after multiple court rulings in Harendranath's favour. "My client has spent more than half his life in court, fighting for justice," Farouq said.

Despite repeated attempts, Abdus Sobhan, the lawyer representing Sonali Bank, could not be reached for comment.

Harendranath's story is a stark reminder of the devastating impact of false accusations and the importance of a fair and impartial justice system. His unwavering determination to seek justice, even in the face of adversity, is an inspiration to all.

An endless wait for justice

How the society, legal system fail rape victims and survivors

NILIMA JAHAN

Nine years have passed since Sohagi Jahan Tonu was raped and murdered inside the restricted Cumilla Cantonment on March 20, 2016.

The case filed for her murder was supposed to be resolved within 180 days. However, nine years on and there has been no significant progress.

Intellectually challenged Samia's (not her real name) fight for justice has dragged on for eight years, since she was raped by a neighbour in November 2016 in Bogura.

Meanwhile, the perpetrator served just three months before being granted bail.

In Noakhali's 2020 gang rape case, the convicted rapists are also out on bail, while the survivor Nasima (not her real name) lives in constant fear, with police protection withdrawn and public humiliation continuous.

A follow-up into the three cases shows prolonged delays, insensitive court practices and the absence of state compensation, leaving the victims and their families in a relentless struggle for justice.

The perpetrators, meanwhile, exploited systemic loopholes, securing bail or using influence, to evade accountability. They intimidated victims and their families or walked free without facing any real consequences.

A 2021 study by Manusher Jonno Foundation analysed 25 rape cases in Bangladesh from 2012 to 2016 and found that, despite rape being a non-bailable offense, the accused were granted bail within 15 days of

their arrest in all cases.

In the Tonu murder case, though two autopsies failed to determine the cause of death, DNA tests confirmed Tonu was raped before being murdered – sperm from three unidentified individuals were found on her clothes. However, none of the sperm samples matched that of any suspect.

The case, initially handled by local police, has bounced from the Detective Branch to the Criminal Investigation Department, and then to the Police Bureau of Investigation since 2020, with six different investigation officers. The latest IO PBI's Tariqul Islam.

"I've just taken over the case. The investigation is still ongoing," he said.

"There are still some requirements that need to be addressed, but once we progress, we'll make sure to update the media and the public."

Tonu's father Md Yaar Hossain, however, said, "This investigating officer doesn't even keep me updated. What kind of investigation is he conducting? When I call him, he acts annoyed. They should hand the case to someone else if they can't handle it."

"I desperately want to meet Dr Yunus.... I want to ask him why my case has been left to languish for so long."

Advocate Salma Ali, who visited the family, said, "They faced immense pressure and couldn't speak freely, even during our visit, as they were constantly monitored."

"High-profile cases may draw attention, but they rarely advance when powerful individuals are involved."

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

A thick layer of dust covers the leaves of a tree at an intersection on Beribandh road at Basila, Mohammadpur, yesterday. Dhaka's air quality has been among the worst in the world for quite some time and the dry winter weather has worsened the situation.

PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN 37pc want to skip classes

Finds survey, blames political instability, pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A survey on the state of primary school children's mental health reveals a grim picture with nearly 37 percent of respondents stating that children tend to skip classes due to recent political instability, natural disasters, and the impact of Covid-19.

Around 55 percent of respondents said that children have become fearful in this situation, according to the survey conducted jointly by the non-governmental organisations, Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) and BRAC Institute of Educational Development.

Explaining the survey process, the two organisations said the study was conducted through a questionnaire with the opinions of stakeholders from a total of 203 support organisations in the eight divisions of the country.

At the same time, these opinions were collected through 12 discussions, opinion collection, and a total of four meetings at the divisional and national levels.

Prof M Nazmul Haq, director of the Teacher Development Institute, and Abdur Rouf, programme manager of CAMPE, presented the findings at an event at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

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NATIONAL UNIVERSITY GRADUATES One out of four unemployed

Finds BIDS survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recent Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) publication revealed that 28 percent (one out of four) of National University students remain unemployed after graduation.

Moreover, a majority of the ones who secure employment are primarily engaged in low-paying jobs, the study further revealed.

The study titled, "Understanding unemployment among college graduates" was unveiled at the BIDS annual conference at a Dhaka hotel last morning.

The findings of the study – featuring an in-depth analysis of labour market outcomes and economic activities of NU graduates, teaching-learning environment, challenges, and way forward – were presented by the institute's research director, SM Zulfiqar Ali.

A total of 1,340 graduates, 670 existing students, and the principals of 61 of the total 608 NU-affiliated colleges, alongside 100 employers, participated in the study.

According to the study, most NU students specialise in social sciences, humanities, and business studies, with a few (3.82 percent at undergraduate and 3.10 percent at postgraduate levels) pursuing science subjects.

A significant 44.26 percent are business studies graduates, of whom 42.29 percent are job holders, while 16.24 percent are self-employed.

The study also found unemployment to be more prevalent among women and students in rural areas. The students who skip higher secondary certification also face high unemployment rates. However, the rates were lower for technical or madrasa (Dakhil) background graduates.

BA pass course graduates and the ones majoring in political science, library management, Bangla, and Islamic history and culture face higher unemployment. However, those specialising in English, economics,

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CTG LAWYER KILLING Accused makes confessional statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chandan Das, accused of killing lawyer Saiful Islam Alif during a clash in Chattogram city court premises on November 26, made a confessional statement before the Chattogram Metropolitan Magistrate Kazi Shariful Islam yesterday.

"After recording his statement, the court sent him back to jail," Shakila Soltana, deputy commissioner (South) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP), told The Daily Star.

Earlier, Chandan was placed on a seven-day remand on December 6.

On December 5, police arrested Chandan from Bhairab, Kishoreganj.

Sources claimed that in video footage of the murder incident, Chandan, wearing a helmet, an orange T-shirt and black trousers, was seen attacking Saiful with a machete.

The clashes erupted on the court premises on November 26 after the bail plea of ex-ISKON leader Chinmoy, also the spokesperson of the Sammilito Sanatoni Jagoron Jote, was rejected in a sedition case

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