

PSI firm, its MD

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agent Inspectorate Bangladesh Ltd. Ahmed, the MD who evaded Tk 10 crore in income taxes, had four accounts with the Standard Chartered Bank, IFIC Bank (Barisal Branch), IFIC Bank (Shantinagar Branch), and the HSBC between 1999-2000 and 2004-05. The Central Intelligence Cell of the NBR found that Ahmed did not show the savings, bank balance and the incomes in his income tax return.

Ahmed also did not cite his real salary, which is very high, in his tax returns. The NBR investigation found that Ahmed deposited Tk 114 crore in the four accounts from 1999 to 2005.

Ahmed has built a number of houses in recent times. If the government takes legal steps against him to know his source of finances for these houses and how much he is earning from them now, the government can unearth more cases of tax evasion, sources said.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) is investigating the sources of the deposits in the four accounts of Ahmed, the sources added.

Following its own investigations and reviewing information provided by the BB, the NBR is almost certain that the BSI has been dodging huge taxes.

The PSI firm recently claimed to the NBR that it did not evade tax. In its defence, the company said it operates under the double taxation avoidance agreement between the BSI Inspectorate Ltd Bangladesh and its UK operations. The NBR however finds this contention totally incorrect and baseless.

"The BSI Inspectorate Ltd has a permanent establishment in Bangladesh. The company is incorporated in Bangladesh and its income is taxable as per double taxation avoidance agreement," the NBR explained.

When The Daily Star contacted Sharfuddin Ahmed, he defended his bank accounts. "The deposits in these accounts actually belong to (my) company. I just kept them in my (personal) account to get interest. I used this interest to set up schools and colleges."

When he was told that according to the BB laws, one cannot transfer

such funds to their personal account unless it is vetted by the company's board, Ahmed then replied, "If creating scopes for education through setting up schools and colleges are considered as irregularities, I accept the blame."

On his not showing the actual income in the tax returns, Ahmed said, "What I have shown in my return sheet is meant for the Inspectorate Bangladesh Ltd (the Bangladeshi agent of BSI Inspectorate)."

He claimed that as per a decision of the NBR in 1997, the foreign PSI company does not need to submit any return.

The Tk 174 crore income, he claimed, goes to the BSI only and now if the NBR wants it to file returns, it will.

A high official of NBR said, "There was no PSI company or any office back in 1997. The PSI companies started operations in Bangladesh in 2001 by establishing permanent offices in Dhaka. As per rules, all PSI companies should pay income tax."

"...Now this company is spreading all sorts of lies as the present NBR management detected the scam," he added.

Sharfuddin lashed out at the NBR saying "it is misusing power and making false claims. There are (two) other PSI companies which have done more business than my company has. Why does the NBR not catch them for tax evasion?"

When The Daily Star asked him if he knew the two other PSI companies — ITS and Bureau Veritas — have evaded tax and if they did, what is the sum, Sharfuddin said, "I don't know."

Apollo hospital

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hospitals of India's Apollo group. The hospital will start with 150 beds but will expand to 450 beds.

It will be equipped with most modern technology in healthcare sector and also have a helipad.

The hospital management plans to set up a nursing institute by September this year and a medical college later.

Armoured cars

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The home ministry earlier decided to form an air wing of the Rab that will have choppers for launching operations against criminals. The home ministry has already given nine armoured cars to the Rab and will soon give three more, sources said.

The BNP led coalition government, a year after its assuming the office, launched the much-talked about Operation Clean Heart deploying the armed forces to curb crime. In a bid to set up a permanent strong force to tackle crime, the government later formed the Rab.

The elite force comprising members from the army, air force, police and ansars started its journey on March 26 last year. The Rab recovered a total of 748 arms including 216 revolvers, 110 pistols, five 9mm SMC, one SMG, eight AK47 rifles, one M16 rifle, 130 locally made guns and 88 pipe guns.

Over 250 people were killed in 'crossfire' with the Rab and other law enforcement agencies and in Rab custody during the last one year that sparked criticism both at home and abroad.

A number of senior ministers, lawmakers and defence experts have expressed surprise to witness sophisticated cars used by the Rab in the Independence Day parade at the National Parade Square on Saturday, sources said.

"What will the Rab men do with the cars that the army uses in wars? Where will the Rab go to fight the criminals?" said a senior minister.

Such armoured cars are not needed for the police force to launch crackdown on social criminals, a defence expert observed.

Use of army vehicles by Rab will rather create panic among people, he said.

Awami League lawmaker Col (rt) Faruk Khan said the government plans to create panic among people, so that nobody can dare protest the Rab activities. "There is no such war in the country that the Rab needs to use armoured cars. The government has rather planned to force the people to live in panic," Faruk Khan told The Daily Star.

A retired major general echoed the same view and said the initiative has been taken in order to give the Rab a sort of pre-eminence over other forces.

A senior army official said, "I have seen such vehicles during the last twenty years in my job place. But this is the first time I see such cars with the civil law enforcers."

"I don't know what the use of such cars by the Rab will be," he

Dhaka asked

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told the news agency yesterday.

"I strongly believe that abandoning the project will mean the loss of an opportunity to bolster cooperation and may even contribute to the creation of an unnecessary bad blood between the two countries with long-term unsavoury implications," Chai Xi cautioned in the letter written on March 19.

The source said the Economic Relations Division (ERD) had signed a supplier's credit agreement of \$ 89 million with China National Machinery Import and Export Corporation (CMC) for BMRE of Karnaphuli Paper Mills Ltd on May 7, 2001.

The contract was awarded to CMC on May 31, 2001. The project was, however, suspended by the BNP-led alliance government after it assumed office.

The letter mentioned that the finance ministry had furnished sovereign guarantee on behalf of the Bangladesh government for repayment of the loan with a full schedule.

CMC had been assured that steps were underway for the payment of mobilisation advance and accordingly CMC had given the requisite bank guarantee, the letter pointed out.

It said before the mobilisation advance was actually paid to CMC, the Bangladesh government backtracked on the project. As a result the BMRE project could not be undertaken.

The letter said the BMRE of Karnaphuli Paper Mills could be a highly profitable enterprise, able to meet the country's requirement of paper to a great extent, retaining its workers and possibly even generating additional employment.

BNP picks

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SAMS Kibria in the January 27 grenade blast at a public meeting of the party in Habiganj that also killed three others.

Mubin was elected lawmaker thrice from the constituency as a Jatiya Party candidate. He later joined the BNP, fought against Kibria in the 2001 parliamentary polls and was defeated by 13,000 votes.

The last date for filing nominations is today, scrutiny will be held tomorrow and the last date for withdrawal of nomination is 7 April.

Meanwhile, the main opposition AL has not yet taken any decision about its participation or boycott of the by-election. It may announce an agitation programme in the district to protest the 'farical' election, party insiders said.

District BNP leaders and activists are yet to recover from the jolt it suffered as investigators found party men's involvement in the January 27 incident.

AL Presidium member and former minister Dewan Farid Gazi, MP from Habiganj-1 constituency, told The Daily Star, "We have already boycotted the so-called elections. There is no scope of our joining the election since the probe and trial of the killers of Kibria are yet to be settled."

3 traffic cops

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issued a suo moto rule on the three traffic policemen asking them to reply in two weeks why contempt proceedings should not be drawn against them for the manner in which they had stopped the judge's car.

The rule came after Deputy Commissioner (DC), Traffic (South) Ansar Uddin Khan Pathan on March 14 submitted to court that the three were on duty at the time of the arrest that had taken place at Shahbagh intersection on March 6.

The same bench had directed the DC Traffic to appear before court with a report specifying names of the traffic policemen and the records of the case filed in 2004 in respect of the judge's car.

The incident took place on March 6 when Justice Sinha was on his way to court with his daughter whom he was to drop at Vigarunnisa Noon School and College. As they reached Shahbagh intersection at about 8:45am, traffic policeman Shahid waved the driver of the car to pull over to receive records of a case filed against the car.

Asma hails FBI

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fulfil the basic conditions of independence, completeness, accountability and transparency," Asma said in a press statement.

She said, "When it is completed, the full investigation report must be made available to the public. Nothing less is acceptable."

About the Kibria murder case, she said they have heard that the case will be handled under the Law and Order Disruption (Speedy Trial) Act. She said they will not "accept any attempt to rush through an incomplete case to protect the individuals who ordered the killing."

"The charge-sheet must include the names of the real masterminds behind my husband's killing," Asma said.

She said they have read newspaper reports that the main accused, Qaiyum, is not being allowed to make confessional statement in front of a magistrate (under the CrPC, Section 164) "for fear of disclosing the names of those who ordered the killing".

Asma said, "Any such attempt by those seeking to protect my husband's killers must be firmly resisted."

The Kibria family will continue their campaign for a full and proper investigation into his assassination and for an end to "political violence that has gripped" the country.

As part of this campaign, they will hold a mass display of the signature banners that have been prepared here and abroad to protest the killing of the former finance minister at 4:00pm on March 31.

Building image

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The team at the meeting had come down hard on the Ministry of Information and its different wings such as Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and state-run news agency BSS for miserably failing to counter the opposition propaganda. They also criticised the PM's Press Wing and labelled it as the "most ineffective" wing at the PMO.

PMO sources said they also placed a proposal for formation of the cell to be headed by SQ Chowdhury with PM's Political Secretary M Harris Chowdhury being the second-in-command. The proposed cell will have more than one adviser and one director general and also have two directors.

Highly placed sources at the PMO said Harris Chowdhury has reportedly refused to be associated with the cell since it was formed by a section of rightwing people who are controversial and hold no place in the mainstream media.

Over 30 computers with IT experts, six rooms at the PMO and adequate logistic and financial support have been sought for the media cell.

PMO sources said a section of journalists and columnists including Chairman of the Press Institute of Bangladesh and columnist Sadeque Khan, Vice-chancellor of National University Dr Aftab Ahmed, Chairman of Sonali Bank Dr Mahbubullah, former Dhaka bureau chief of Reuters Atiqul Alam, Editor of The Independent Mahbubul Alam and former minister (Press) in Bangladesh's mission in Washington DC Syed Kamaluddin, who was later removed, are with the media cell.

The move to form such a cell keeping the BNP policymakers in the dark has created a serious rancour, with most of them questioning the need for having such a cell and the ability of the members to restore or brighten the government's image.

Most of the policymakers, ministers and influential leaders of the ruling BNP expressed their ignorance about such a media cell.

"So far as my knowledge goes, the journalists and columnists of the cell have little access to the mainstream media as they associated

only with rightwing newspapers," said an influential BNP leader, wishing anonymity.

He added that the move to form such a cell was nothing but an attempt to give some financial help to the rightwing journalists and columnists.

Influential officials at the PMO said many of them are also unaware of such a cell. Several officials at the Ministry of Information and PM's Press Wing said that instead of restoring image of the government the cell would create obstructions to the current propaganda machinery of the government.

Rice becomes

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were between Tk 20 and Tk 21 yesterday, which were between Tk 16 and Tk 18 a kg year ago.

The report was sent to top policy and decision-makers including the secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, private secretaries to the prime minister and food, commerce, industries, agriculture and other secretaries.

The TCB has collected data from Mirpur-1, Mohammadpur and Karwan Bazar kitchen markets to prepare the report.

Coarse flour (atta) was selling at Tk 17 to Tk 20 yesterday, the price of which ranged between Tk 14 and Tk 17 a year ago, marking a 19.35 percent increase.

Broiler chickens were selling between Tk 78 and Tk 80 a kilogram yesterday, the price of which was between Tk 65 and Tk 70 a year ago.

Price of a one-kg packet of Milk Vita milk powder was between Tk 243 and Tk 245, which was one year ago Tk 210 to Tk 215, while price of one-kg Diploma milk powder packet has increased by 12.63 percent.

The price of sugar has increased by 15 percent and iodised salt by 14.29 percent during the corresponding time.

However, the price of soybean oil has gone down by 13.21 percent, palm oil 16.05 percent, onion 21.87 percent, dry chili 25.88 percent and potato 20 percent, the TCB report says.

Political power play

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and some ruling party high-ups," observed an official, requesting anonymity.

Pressure for change in the bidding rules for the 450-megawatt Sirajganj Power Plant is one of the major causes for the disagreement, the official added.

The Power Development Board (PDB), which once initiated the project, finalised a deal with the Bangladeshi Summit group last year. But when Summit completed its arrangements for finances for the project last year with support from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, the Prime Minister's Office in June suddenly cancelled the bid. The official reason for this action, as a letter to the power division explains, is that private power projects will now be pursued by the Power Cell instead of the PDB. Sources, however, said the government took the decision because Summit's chief executive's brother is an Awami League lawmaker.

Besides, the government is still allowing a private power plant under the PDB like the Meghnaghat 2 bid, where a close government lobby is all set to get the deal. In November, the Power Cell's bid for the Sirajganj project attracted four pre-qualification proposals. Ever since, a businessman close to the ruling party has been trying hard to have several rules stretched to qualify in the bid.

Among others, he is trying to change the bidder's experience criterion, which currently requires that a bidder have experience setting up a minimum 300-megawatt power plant. The businessman wants the Power Cell to change this rule and allow in total experience of building plants of 300 megawatts. The Power Cell DG has all along been refusing to entertain the request.

The same businessman in the early nineties lobbied for the Raozan Power Plant considered to be one of the worst plants in the country as well as the troubled Barapukuria coal mine and coal-fired power projects. "The second issue is the Meghnaghat 3 power project," said a source. Although the power crisis is acute and initiatives to build new plants are very few, the government did not bother to go for an open bid for the Meghnaghat 3 plant.

A local business group close to the ruling party put forward an unsolicited proposal on behalf of Cadogan-Manning Group, a little known power company joint venture. But the proposal has not followed any process. This group so far has undertaken some power plant rehabilitation projects, but no major projects.

The Power Cell argued that the proposal violates the Private Power Generation Policy in every single way including ensuring competent developers through open bidding. But eventually it had to recommend the project. Before giving the nod, Power Cell asked the company to provide an unconditional bid-bond. But Cadogan only agreed to provide a conditional bid-bond.

Finally, the government was moving to set up small power plants ranging from 10 megawatts to 30 megawatts in such an unconventional way that the DG could not oblige.

Like the Sirajganj project, the

Three Rab

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produced the three before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court at 3:00pm, submitting a forwarding report saying the three should be confined until completion of the investigation since they gave important information during their three days' remand.

Their defence lawyers, submitting bail petitions saying their clients were implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass them, prayed for granting their bail.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate rejected the bail petitions and ordered the three sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

In the case filed with Mirpur Police Station, it was alleged that Sergeant Atiq and five others went to the house of Ratan Ali, complainant of the case, at 32, Courtbari in Mirpur at about 12:20pm on March 23. Identifying themselves as Rab-4 members, they stole Tk 7.8 lakh that Ali had in an almshouse after threatening to kill him in a 'crossfire'. Of the six, five managed to escape by two CNG-run three-wheelers waiting outside for them, but Sergeant Atiq was nabbed by the locals.

Later, following leads obtained from Atiq, a joint team of police and Rab arrested Wali and Rafiq. They recovered Tk 2,45,500 from Wali and Tk 10,000 from Rafiq.

Ratan Ali filed a case with Mirpur Police Station under the Speedy Trial (Law and Disruption) Act the same day, accusing six people, including Atiq. Three others Rab members - Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Rafiqul Islam and their two sources Masud and Babul - are still on the run.

Meanwhile, police arrested Mozibur Rahman, alias Babu, 17, son of Abul Kalam Azad, at Manikdi in the city's Cantonment area on Friday in connection with the robbery. He was sent to jail after being produced before the CMM on Saturday. The court passed the order as the IO did not submit any remand prayer.

Mugger killed

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wristwatches from pedestrians, a team of patrol police of the Shyampur Police Station appeared on the scene.

"The muggers opened fire and started hurling hand bombs on the police in a bid to escape," reads a police press release.

The release said, "As the criminals attempted to snatch firearms of police while fleeing, constable Saleh Ahmed opened fire from his shotgun, killing Kawser on the spot."

Locals caught muggers Emon Bashir and Kader with the help of police.

Police recovered the two mobile phones, a knife, seven cocktails and Tk 924 from their possession.

Shyampur police also claimed that a constable was injured and was being treated at Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital.

Owners to run

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if necessary, they will offer the passengers a 50-percent fare discount on hartal days.

The government has already given the transport operators assurance that necessary security and compensation will be provided for running inter-district buses during hartal hours, said GM Siraj, a ruling BNP lawmaker and president of BTOA.

GM Siraj said, "No matter who—BNP or Awami League—are in power, we will never stop opposing hartal."

Replying to a query, Siraj said that the home ministry has assured them of paying both the passengers and vehicles enough compensation for injuries and damage resulted from attacks on hartal days.

When asked what the associations will do in case of injuries to and fatalities of the passengers, he said the bus and truck owners associations were already assisting passengers who had been victims of hartal violence.

BSPS President MA Rashid Khan said, "We never supported hartal, rather we were forced to observe hartal."

The leaders demanded that the government soon install weighing scale to check over-loaded freight trucks, determine the cost of running owners and workers associations, and effect a fine of Tk 5 a day for failure to pay the road tax on time. Besides, they called for the government to meet the demands that were earlier settled with the communications ministry.

Among others, BSPS Additional General Secretary Saiful Alam, Dhaka Bus Truck Owners Group Vice President M Jalaluddin, Jatri Seba General Secretary Shamsuzzaman Sentu, BTOA General Secretary M Kafiluddin and Assistant General Secretary Golam Morshed Pintu were present.

FBI records

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Dhaka at 12:45pm.

A reliable source told the news agency that the US intelligence personnel are likely to meet home ministry officials today, after which a joint statement may be issued on the outcome of their investigation.

Earlier on Sunday, the team visited Boiyder Bazar, examined the spot and its surroundings, took video of the spot and examined records of the case.

The US investigators also went to Habiganj jail where they questioned the principal accused, Qaiyum, and others.

Eight of the ten chargesheeted accused are now in Habiganj jail.

Police submitted the charge sheet on March 19 accusing the ten, mostly BNP men, including Habiganj BNP Vice-president Qaiyum, of the grenade attack on Awami League meeting at Boiyder Bazar that killed Kibria and four others.

Opposition parties

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election is held absolutely free, fair and neutral, the sources said.

The parties believe the existing caretaker government system lacks 'check and balance' due to certain loopholes that should be plugged before the next polls.

A sub-committee on legal affairs formed by the AL with Barrister Amir-Ul Islam as its chairperson is now working on the reforms aiming to make the interim government and the EC credible and independent, party sources said.

The sub-committee will sit with the party presidium and working committee to finalise the proposals soon after the return of party chief Sheikh Hasina from abroad. She is likely to return home from the US on April 6.

"We hope we will be able to finalise the reform proposals by April 15," advocate Rahmat Ali, co-chair of the sub-committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the sub-committee members are reviewing the legal aspects of the caretaker government and EC reforms.

"We are waiting for the return of the opposition leader. In her absence it is not possible to finalise the reform proposals," another senior AL leader said wishing anonymity.

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu also said they hope to finalise the party's reform proposals by mid-April.

On March 14, the main opposition party at a dialogue formally raised the demand for reforms in the caretaker government and the EC.

Leaders of the major opposition parties at the meeting called for appointing the caretaker government chief and chief election commissioner through consensus of all parties.

The AL also announced that it would not take part in the next parliamentary election unless the reforms are made. It threatened to wage a vigorous movement on the issue of caretaker government reforms.

The government however outright rejected the demand for reforms.

Sources said the AL sub-committee will propose appointment of the caretaker government chief on the basis of consensus and making the EC truly independent.

It will also propose handing over the charge of the defence ministry to the caretaker government during the interim period. At present, the president takes the charge of defence ministry when the caretaker government assumes office.

"Keeping the charge of defence ministry under the president is against the spirit of parliamentary democracy," advocate Rahmat Ali said.

PANEL OF OMBUDSMEN

The AL may also propose forming a panel of 10 ombudsmen who will hold permanent offices for a period of five or 10 years to look after important ministries and act as

caretaker government at the time of general elections, says UNB.

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam in an interview with the news agency yesterday said some 10 ombudsmen could be selected by a Constitution Commission composed of people having honesty, integrity, experience, wisdom and a non-partisan attitude.

The ombudsmen could be picked from among the Advisers of caretaker government of 1991 and '96, he said.

Myanmar

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The estimated cost of this part of the road with two bridges and 90 culverts is about Tk 94.

Engineers and construction firms from Bangladesh will implement the first phase of the project, the meeting said.

Besides, the government will build the 23km Ramu-Gundom road in Bangladesh with its own resources at an estimated cost of Tk 69.13 crore.

In the second phase of the project, another 110km stretch of the road from Bawli Bazar to Kyautaw in Myanmar will be constructed at an estimated cost of Tk 770.26 crore.

The meeting said the government has already approached the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to finance the second phase. Financial assistance will also be sought from China and other donor countries, it added.

The Myanmar task force will hold several meetings with Technical Task Force of Bangladesh to discuss the technical and financial matters of the project in the next two days.

Roads and Highways Additional Chief Engineer Md Idris Mia, chief of the Bangladesh task force, Communications Secretary Shafiqul Islam and R&H Chief Engineer Fajur Rahman attended the meet.

UAE to deport

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these children to leave Bangladesh as well as other countries, even from neighbouring countries, including Iran. In case of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, "it is easy to get a visit visa for the UAE".

The director told the envoys that it is difficult to pinpoint an official estimation of camel jockeys, but there will be at least 2,700 of the unfortunate boys in the UAE.

He said a rehabilitation centre for the camel jockeys will be set up to oversee the repatriation of these underage boys to their countries of origin.

BTTB still hopeful

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cable in due time," Nurul Islam, chairman of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) told a workshop in Dhaka yesterday.

The BTTB chief was speaking at the 'Reporting Training Workshop on Submarine Cable' organised by the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) at its conference room which was attended by a number of journalists from the national dailies.

When asked about the alleged corruption and price manipulation in the proposal for the optical fibre link where the BTTB wanted to award the job to Siemens, the highest bidder, the BTTB chairman declined to comment on the issue.

"I'm unable to comment on the decision of the Cabinet Purchase Committee, the highest decision making body," he said adding that the cabinet committee decision is all right.

Last time the BTTB took eight months only to complete the bidding process for the Cox's Bazar-Chittagong fibre optic link, but this time it has only seven months in hand to finish not only the bidding but also the installation of the cable.

"We'll call fresh tender immediately and evaluate it as early as possible so that we can set up the link with the completion of the submarine cable project," said Monwar Hossain, director of the submarine cable project.

The Cabinet Purchase Committee last week at a meeting rejected a proposal to award the contract for the optical fibre link for alleged corruption and price manipulation. The committee asked the telecoms ministry to re-tender the work.

The committee also asked the authorities to punish the officials concerned for advocating a contract that could be made at a price Tk 17 crore lower than the price proposed.

The BTTB had wanted to award the contract to German company Siemens, the highest bidder in the project outlining a cost of Tk 47 crore whereas Canadian bidder Nortel offered the lowest bid of Tk 30 crore.

The cabinet committee also directed the BTTB to set clear-cut evaluation criteria during the re-tendering as the BTTB violated the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) in many areas, according to sources.

The submarine cable project itself has been delayed by more than four years already. In March last year, after sitting on the project for four years, Bangladesh signed an agreement with a consortium of 16 international telecom operators.

Pakistan win

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Sami for a single to third man. Gavaskar played 125 Tests