

GD against Ershad

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Uttara, neither did he threaten

Trisha. One of the lawyers for Bidisha yesterday, meanwhile, petitioned with the High Court (HC) for a freeze on further arrest and harassment of Bidisha even if the police file fresh cases against her.

Hearings on the case are likely to be held on Saturday, her counsillor Barrister Tanjibul Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bidisha was freed Monday evening from prison cell 23 days into her arrest and has been undergoing treatment at Sikder Medical College and Hospital at Gulshan since then.

The family, however, did not let journalists meet her on advice of her counsillors.

Uttara police, however, took one and half an hours to record the GD as the duty officer could not decide about whether to take it.

Trisha along with her father Abubakar Siddique went to the police station at 2:30pm when the officer-in-charge (OC) was not present. The duty-officer called up the OC and his superiors for further instructions and at one point he left the office for a phone-fax shop and faxed the GD copy to some unknown person.

Later OC Akhteruzzaman came to his office at 3:20pm and told Bidisha's family that he would record the GD.

In the complaint Trisha said former military dictator Ershad along with his hired gunmen went to her Uttara residence at 8:00 Monday night after Bidisha's release from the prison cell.

Ershad took his party men including Reza and Mashi and some

goons with him in five vehicles and asked their residential guard Raju to open the gate, she said.

As the guard refused, they first tried to bribe him, then yelled at and finally threatened him.

She came down hearing the uproar, the FIR said. Ershad along with his men then shouted at her that they better not allow Bidisha in the house. "If Bidisha stays here, we will kill you and your family and abduct your child Nihan," she quoted them as telling her.

Trisha also mentioned in the complaint that she is scared as the gunmen have been hanging around her residence since then.

The incident indicates that Ershad's men may harm me, my sisters Bidisha and Manisha, my father and my child at any moment," she said, urging for necessary steps after investigating the matter.

Bidisha's father also told reporters that he is scared of his daughter and his family.

Ershad told The Daily Star that he has closed the "Bidisha chapter", adding that he was at home throughout Monday. "Besides, I move with police protection and the police would have known had I gone there."

"Why should I go there? Where should I go? Who is Bidisha to me, (she is no one) but just one of millions of women in the country?"

"She may file a case or a GD or whatever she wants. What harm can she do to me?" he said adding, "I don't give a damn about her and her family anymore," the former president said.

Interpol, FBI men

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(criminal investigation department) are on a manhunt in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country to nab some of the suspects in the August 21 carnage.

The Interpol and FBI men arrived in Dhaka on June 22. The government called them in after it had claimed to have obtained 'vital clues' to the grenade blasts from detained top listed criminal Arman, George Mian, and Awami League (AL) leader Moklesur Rahman.

George gave deposition before a Chief Metropolitan Magistrate on Sunday admitting his involvement in the grisly attack, which claimed 23 lives and injured and maimed over 200 others.

However, flaws in George's deposition, which is said to have disclosed the plans and action of the August 21 grenade attacks, have raised doubts about the accuracy of the statement.

Separate teams of Interpol had visited Bangladesh thrice while Trung Vu twice for investigation of the grenade attacks on an AL rally on its Bangabandhu Avenue.

During their stay, the experts from Interpol and FBI visited the CID office and held a series of meetings with its top officials.

MANHUNT

A top CID official wishing anonymity said they are now mainly focused on how to arrest Linkon alias Linkon Maha.

The official said according to George Mian, Linkon and Mukul were involved in smuggling in the fire-arms and explosives that were seized from a signboard shop at Kuril Badda on November 30, 2003.

The law enforcers recovered four AK-47 assault rifles, two revolvers, 20 hand grenades, four time bombs, a huge number of AK-47 bullets, and

other explosives after a gunfight with the gunrunners.

"We believe Linkon's arrest might lead us to the source of grenades used in the August 21 blasts," the CID official said adding that the whereabouts of Mukul can also be known from him.

He however declined to disclose the names of the places where the teams are carrying out raids.

JS body

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environmental damage caused by Tengratila gas field blowout.

The committee at a meeting expressed deep concern at the second time blowout in the gas field which caused huge loss of national resources and damage to environment.

Kalimuddin Ahmed will head the subcommittee that will visit the gas field in Sunamganj and place the report before the standing committee within the shortest possible time.

The meeting also discussed a report of two intelligence agencies - NSI and DGFI - that identified 20 top corrupt officials at the Directorate of Forest and Environment. The report will be sent to the environment minister for action.

Environment and Forest Minister Tariful Islam, lawmakers Khurram Khan Chowdhury and Hafiz Uddin Ahmed spoke at the meeting. State Minister for Forest and Environment Zafarul Islam Chowdhury was present at the meeting on a special invitation.

Committee Chairman Nazimuddin Alam presided over the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsads Bhaban.

Now Akbar son

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Inland Container Depot at Kamalapur.

It is alleged that the firm gifted the minister's son the luxury car for his help in awarding the lucrative contract.

According to sources, the cabinet purchase committee at first rejected the proposal of Agroted as the firm did not have previous experience. But later it got the contract following the green signal from the prime minister's office.

Asked, Akbar Hossain denied the allegation and claimed that there was no irregularity in awarding the contract to a friend of his son. He said the firm got the job through open tender and after approval from the cabinet purchase committee.

The shipping ministry had no role in it, Akbar said in his reaction to a news-report on the use of the luxury car by his son.

"The job was awarded following all rules and regulations and there was no irregularities," he claimed. The luxurious car used by his son, Akbar said, "My son does not live with me and I am not responsible for all his activities."

The minister also claimed that his son has returned the car and asked his friend not to keep it in his house because it would create lot of problems. But his son said the car was taken back for official purposes and it came again.

Akbar denied the allegation that the car was gifted to his son. He said the car was not registered in his son's name. Agroted is the owner of the vehicle.

Akbar's son Simon also said the car was not given to him. "Its owner is Galib who is my school friend. He lives in the house of his father-in-law at Chairmanbari in Banani which lacks adequate parking space," he claimed.

He also denied the allegation of helping his friend in getting the shipping ministry contract. "The firm got the job through proper channel and I am not involved in the process. The firm was the lowest bidder among three firms," Simon added.

Galib Ahmed, when contacted last night, told The Daily Star that he did not present the car to the minister's son. He claimed that the car was kept there because he lacks parking facility in his house and office.

Galib said the car will be taken back when he will be able to arrange parking facility.

Asked whether Simon is using the car, he said, "Simon is my friend. He can use the car."

Galib also claimed that the container loading contract was obtained through open tender and there was no question of bribing any one for getting the job. He said the price of the car is around Tk 40 lakh.

Galib denied
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charges as the investigation failed to furnish sufficient evidence against them.

On the night of February 15, two powerful bombs blasted at the Porsha Brac office injuring a few persons.

Earlier, the courts had denied bail to Galib, who is now in Bogra jail, in the Lakkhikola open stage drama bomb blast and Shafiqul Islam murder cases.

Galib is also facing similar cases in Sirajganj and Gaibandha.

Tengratila

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Anwarul Azim visited the gas field area yesterday.

They talked to officials of Niko and Bapex and others including local people.

The committee will sit with Niko officials in Sylhet today, said an official of Sunamganj district administration.

An official of the Canadian company, Niko, claimed US company Century have agreed to provide a rig for the proposed relief well at Tengratila. But shifting of the rig from Unocal's Moulibazar gas field will begin at least after two to three weeks because it is engaged in drilling of Well-6 there, he mentioned.

"Although we now have to wait for a stable situation at Tengratila, it will take less time to start drilling of the proposed relief well as we have a ready pad to be used for the purpose," he said.

Asked about compensation for inhabitants of the adjacent villages, the Niko official said the company had shifted 76 families after the 7 January blowout and fire. Since they were yet to return to their houses on safety grounds, the company would continue to provide them assistance, he added.

He declined to say anything on the losses caused by the blowout and fire this time. "We will just have to wait for the report of the government-formed probe committee," he said.

Some of the villagers who had moved to safer places leaving their houses after Friday's explosion and fire were found coming back yesterday. But no female members of the families returned.

NBR may revise

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his budget speech, had repeatedly said that it is unethical to allow whitening black money and such moves discourage genuine taxpayers. BNP kept such provisions since it came to power in 2001.

As the finance minister surprisingly changed his stance and proposed for continuing the provision in his budget speech, it triggered criticism even from the ruling party lawmakers - including the finance minister's son Naser Rahman.

"The government is now considering an end to such option. The finance minister is likely to announce that this is the last chance to whiten black money," said an NBR source.

Regarding the SIM card issue, which generated much controversy as the government has imposed an unusual tax of Tk 1,200 per card, the NBR is now considering lowering the VAT and supplementary duty to Tk 750.

A recent writ petition filed in the High Court on this issue shows that even Tk 750 per SIM card is much higher than what the total VAT and supplementary duty would actually be, if the NBR uses its present formula.

The price of each SIM card is only \$2 to \$4 [Tk 120 to Tk 240] depending on the quality. But the NBR put its price at over Tk 2,100 to justify its VAT and Tk 1,200.

The NBR also proposed an increase of corporate tax for non-listed companies to 40 percent from the current 37.5 percent. But as this has been criticised as a non-incentive for small businesses and industries, the NBR is planning to keep it at 37.5 percent.

Sitara's body

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The body will be brought to the journalism department at 11:00am and from there to the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla at 12 noon for the students and colleagues to bid her farewell.

Her namaz-e-janaza will be held at the DU Central Mosque after Jahn prayers, and she will be laid to rest at Banani graveyard in the afternoon.

Sitara's mother, younger sister, and brother in law, who were abroad, returned to Bangladesh yesterday.

The qukhwani of Sitara, 52, will be held on July 1 after Asr prayers at her father's residence on road No-124, house no-14, Gulshan-1, Dhaka.

WHO alarmed

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be winding down, said a member of a WHO team that visited the remote region last week with Chinese health officials.

Chinese authorities haven't killed any birds to prevent the spread of the disease because they are rare, protected species, said Dr Julie Hall, WHO's China-based coordinator for communicable diseases, surveillance and response.

The 5,000 dead birds came from five species and included gulls, geese, shelduck and cormorant, according to the World Organization for Animal Health Web site.

Hall urged the Chinese government to carry out more testing for the deadly H5N1 bird flu virus, saying only 12 dead birds and two people have been tested, with the people coming up negative.

"What we want to see is more testing going on," she said at a news conference.

China reported in May that 178 geese had been found dead in Qinghai Lake, a vast saltwater lake in Qinghai that is a major transit point for migratory birds. Authorities later raised that to 519 and then to about 1,000 in late May. The official toll hasn't changed since then.

The government's early reluctance to release information about the outbreak fueled concern about a possible cover-up and rumors on Web sites that as many as 120 people had died of the flu. Chinese authorities deny that any people were buried for the posts.

A four-member appointment committee headed by Nazmul Huda appointed the additional employees

Jute ministry wants

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state-run jute mills close down, it would make 25,000 workers jobless and eventually the country will lose its jute export market to competitor India.

After weeks of discussions with mainstream opposition political parties including the Awami League, the representatives of the jute mill staff yesterday called a 12-hour general strike across the country and a 24-hour industrial strike on July 16.

The Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) on Sunday put forward a proposal to the jute ministry to allow it to borrow from commercial banks for purchase of jute during July-September so that its 22 jute mills remain operational.

"Experience shows the government breaches its commitment to the donors considering the 'political cost' of aggrieving thousands of jute workers, specially when the elections are round the corner," said an industry insider. "But if the government disburses fund, as it did last year, after the peak jute procurement season, the BJMC would again be forced to buy jute from middlemen instead of growers at an inflated price. If this happens this year too, the jute sector will further dip into the red."

Textile and Jute Minister Shahjahan Siraj appealed to the prime minister and finance minister in the Jatiya Sangsads last week to salvage the plunging jute sector.

Siraj partly blamed the government's delayed and paltry fund allocation (Tk 30 crore) in fiscal 2004-05 for closure of 15 out of the 22 BJMC-run jute mills. BJMC Chairman AFM Solaiman Chowdhury told The Daily Star recently that in 2004-5, the BJMC had to borrow Tk 30 crore from power in 2001.

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