

Babar's litany

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political parties, contributing to the rise of recent confrontational political environment in the country, said competent sources in various law enforcement agencies. Till August 31, 2006 the police arrested as many as 1,23,566 political activists most of whom were implicated in various false cases, the sources said.

The role played by Babar changed the direction of the investigation of the fatal August 21, 2004 bomb attack on an Awami League rally in the capital, intelligence sources said.

Although the 2004 attack had been marked as one of the biggest terror attacks on a political party leaving 23 persons including senior AL leaders killed and 300 others injured, the police made no progress in the investigation. Then on August 2006, the police came up with a so-called confession of one Judge Mia stating that a group of ordinary criminals had orchestrated the attack. Since then, the investigation has died down. It was subsequently reported in the media that behind the scene the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police was subsidising the regular expenses of Judge Mia's family, the sources said.

Babar also played a questionable role in the investigation of the biggest ever incident of arms smuggling in the country, the sources added. In April 2004 10 truck loads of arms and ammunition were intercepted by law enforcers while being smuggled. The investigators never made any progress as Babar reportedly made the police file a 'simpler case'. Investigators were never asked to find out who had been involved in the smuggling and where the cache was being taken to - rather Babar directly discouraged the law enforcers from proceeding with the investigation, according to police officials involved in the case.

Babar also allegedly silenced the Bogra arms haul case. Although a huge cache of bullets and explosives was recovered from a truck in Bogra, investigation regarding the haul stalled within a few months with some significant arrests.

He also played a significant role in the rise of executed Jamaatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leader Bangla Bhai in North Bengal in 2004, intelligence sources said. While the media was reporting about the atrocities of Bangla Bhai, Babar denied the existence of the Islamist militants to the media. The then police super of Rajshahi, Masud Mia, was openly cooperating with Bangla Bhai in his killing missions. The other police officer who sheltered Bangla Bhai -- the then deputy inspector of Rajshahi police Nur Mohammad -- was promoted to the position of an additional inspector general superceding officers senior to him.

During his five years in the home ministry, Babar spearheaded purchase of motor vehicles worth a few thousand crores of taka for Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), police and

the fire brigade, the ministry officials said.

In 2005, ahead of the Saarc summit in the capital, the government decided to procure 1970 cars with Tk 121 crore of government finance and some foreign funds. The police headquarters floated a tender in which 16 importers participated. But at the last moment, through a circular, the authorities changed the conditions of bidding in such a way that allowed only two importers to participate. That prompted the other bidders to lodge complaints with the government alleging corruption in the bidding process, but that did not work. Finally the vehicles were mainly procured from Pacific Motors, owned by the then foreign minister M Moshed Khan, the home ministry sources said.

Born in 1958, Babar was an unknown face when he was first elected to the parliament in 1991. He was involved with import and other businesses throughout the nineties, maintaining a low profile.

After he became a member of the parliament for the second time in 2001, the then prime minister Khaleda Zia made him the state minister for home affairs on request from Tarique Rahman. Although initially now detained Altaf Hossain Chowdhury was the full minister for some time, Babar was assertive from the beginning, the ministry sources said.

Police sources said Babar made sure that only he took the decisions regarding transfers and postings in the police department for the levels from constables to high officials. And that control helped him to institutionalise partisanship at all levels of the police department.

In June 2006, 700 constables were made assistant sub-inspectors and each of them paid bribes of Tk 1.5 lakh to Tk 2 lakh, the sources said. Bribes were also taken from police officers interested in joining the UN peace keeping missions, added the sources.

Babar also unduly modified the training courses for police officers, claimed the sources. A one-year training course for assistant superintendents of police (ASP) was slashed down to nine months and another one-year training course for sub-inspectors was reduced to six months, the sources said.

The sources also alleged that Babar influenced the Public Service Commission (PSC) to recruit 200 ASPs whose only qualification was that they were involved in the politics of the ruling party of the time. Again, those ASPs also allegedly had to pay bribes to get the jobs.

While revamping the police department by changing their uniforms, Babar dropped a boat from the police monogram which the department had inherited from the colonial British Raj, the police sources said. The move was viewed by many as a manifestation of deep anti-Awami League sentiment of Babar.

ETV on list of approved channels

UNB, Dhaka

Ekushey Television Ltd (ETV) has been put on the list of the approved satellite TV channels, said an information ministry handout yesterday.

Russia test-launches new ballistic missile

AP, Moscow

Russia yesterday test-launched a new intercontinental ballistic missile, apparently developed secretly, that a top government official said could penetrate any defense system, Russian news agencies reported.

The missile would modernize Russia's stockpile at a time of rising tensions with the West.

"As of today Russia has new (missiles) that are capable of overcoming any existing or future missile defense systems," ITAR-Tass quoted First Deputy Prime Minister Sergei Ivanov as saying, "So in terms of defense and security Russian can look calmly to the country's future."

President Vladimir Putin and Ivanov, a former defense minister seen as a potential candidate to succeed the Russian leader in elections next year, have repeatedly said their country would continue to improve its nuclear weapons systems and respond to U.S. plans to deploy a missile defense system in Europe.

The missile capable of carrying multiple independent warheads was fired from a mobile launcher at the Plesetsk launch in northwest Russia, and its test warhead landed on target about 3,400 miles away on the Far Eastern Kamchatka Peninsula, according to a statement from Russian Strategic Missile Forces.

Ivanov said Russia also successfully tested a tactical cruise missile.

Mainul

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to speak about them.

About Hasina's remarks that the government's ongoing drive is against politics, not corruption, the adviser said he is not interested to make any comment on any politician's remark.

"Politicians make their observations and it is their responsibility. I don't want to comment about their remarks," he said.

Asked about the reasons behind the arrest of senior Awami League leaders, he said, "You can go to the Anti-Corruption Commission and the home ministry for information about that."

Discharge duties

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They have helped restore peace in many war-torn parts of the globe and have ushered in an era of hope in societies which had only known despair, the CA stated.

"Our peacekeeping activities have also enormously contributed to our diplomatic relations. Countries in which our soldiers and policemen have operated have become linked to us. These linkages have found fruition in close bonds," he said.

"It is our hope that friendship that have been forged will be reflected in increasing economic and commercial ties and this will help development of those countries as well as of ourselves."

He said participation in peace-keeping has been a priority component of Bangladesh's foreign policy and has satisfied its objective of partnering with the UN in furthering the aspirations of the world body.

It has been demonstrated to the world that despite many and varied limitations of Bangladesh, it is a positive player in the international scene. "Indeed we pledge to remain so every possible way."

"Our patriotic armed forces have set values, norms, and standards wherever they have gone. These are evident in their role when today, in Bangladesh itself, they have stood rock solid in support of the caretaker government," the head of the caretaker government told his audience.

The chief adviser noted that the professionalism that Bangladesh troops and policemen have shown in the peacekeeping operations has been widely acclaimed, and participation has also "sharpened and honed our own skill".

"This has further strengthened our readiness to defend our motherland, should the need arise," he said.

The chief adviser reiterated government commitment to modernise the armed forces. "They should be appropriately equipped. This will enable us to respond more effectively to the peacekeeping needs of the United Nations," he said.

He recalled the supreme sacrifices of the troops in UN peacekeeping missions and said, "Their deaths cannot, must not, go in vain."

Brig Gen Mahbub Haider Khan conducted a multimedia presentation titled "Bangladesh in UN Peace Support Operation", projecting operations and role of members of the armed forces and police in UN peacekeeping missions.

A video documentary on operation and performance of the Bangladesh UN peacekeepers was also screened at the function.

Harris house

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house situated in the upscale area of Gulshan in the capital. It is the first instance of recovering such a large scale expensive property from a high profile corruption suspect since the ongoing anti-corruption drive started in February.

The house at the address of Holding #6 on Road #53 in Gulshan, had initially been allotted to Harris Chowdhury in 2002 when he had been the political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, with the rank and status of a state minister.

Harris liked the house so much that he started to make plans to acquire it permanently, a source close to Harris family said.

As part of his plans he influenced Rajuk to mark the house as abandoned with help from former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas. Abusing his power, Harris later influenced Rajuk to allot the house to some Fakir Mahbub Anam alias Swapan. Mirza Abbas not only allotted the house to his party man but also influenced Rajuk to devalue the price of the house. Rajuk officials evaluated the house only at Tk 5.34 crore but the task force probe committee now estimates the price at no less than Tk 40 crore.

Harris Chowdhury bought the one-storey house from Rajuk in 2004 and added another floor to it following the allotment. He also renovated and beautified the house extensively. To avoid any legal problem Harris also arranged to transfer the power of attorney of the house to his younger brother Emran Hossain Chowdhury.

There are allegations that the house was renovated with government fund also.

Harris Chowdhury and his family had been living in the house until the current interim government took over the reins of the country. Now Harris is convicted in absentia in a graft case and sentenced to three years imprisonment for not submitting his wealth statements to the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

The authorities are now preparing to file some more graft cases against him for acquiring a large number of properties illegally at home and abroad.

When the interim government took over power, Harris Chowdhury went into hiding and his family left the house abandoned. Members of the joint forces along with forest officials seized a pair of pew forks and an Infinity luxury sports utility vehicle which he had received as a bribe from Orion Group for awarding the company the construction contract of Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover in the capital. So far the task force and the ACC investigators found assets worth more than Tk 22.5 crore of Harris Chowdhury that are disproportionate to his known source income.

Most of those assets are under the names of others.

The original allottee of the house Fakir Mahbub Anam applied to the government on May 6 this year pleading to be allowed to surrender the house to it.

The original allottee, in his application to the secretary to the housing and public works ministry mentioned that the house had been allotted to him but it is not really his house. Harris Chowdhury owned the house and himself paid for the expenses for getting it and renovating it.

Following the allotment on October 15, 2004 Harris and his family were living in the house, Fakir mentioned in his letter adding that he was keen to surrender the house to the government and was ready help the government regarding the repossession.

The government formed a probe committee to look into the culture of corruption allegedly plaguing Rajuk as well as the corruption of Mirza Abbas. The Gulshan house is one of the 18 government houses Mirza Abbas sold to his peers for a nominal price when he was the housing and public works minister.

The probe committee also found that the house is situated on a total of 22.8 kathas of land, and according to the present value of lands in Gulshan, the price of the house is no less than Tk 40 crore, a member of the inquiry committee said.

The joint forces investigated the case and initiated a process of getting the house back for Rajuk. First they arranged to nullify the power of attorney, then they completed the process of registration yesterday.

"The original allottee came to my office and signed the deed of surrender yesterday afternoon," AKM Harun, the chairman of Rajuk, told The Daily Star last night.

The Rajuk chairman said the Public Works Department will take over the house and the housing ministry will decide what to do with it.

It was the first case to recover such huge land property from any high profile politicians since the present government started their anti corruption drive.

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powerful organisation, none should take it lightly," it added.

The other installations the militant outfit threatened to bomb include the National Museum, Chittagong airport, Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, TV stations, Radio centres, and offices and publication points of different national newspapers.

Zia's death anniversary

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modestly with programmes curtailed because of the state of emergency.

Zia was assassinated on this day in 1981 by a group of disgruntled army officers at the Chittagong Circuit House.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and the chiefs of three services will pay tributes to the memory of the late president at his grave. Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddique will also place wreaths.

The BNP will observe its founder's death anniversary at a time when many of its senior leaders, including Zia's son and BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, are in jail on charges of corruption. Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia is also facing criticism from some influential party leaders for practising dynastic politics and wielding absolute power.

The BNP has chalked out limited programmes, including placing wreaths at Zia's grave, offering Fataha and organising Milad Mahfil, as the government did not allow it to organise elaborate programmes.

The party did not also get permission to hold discussion meetings as it does every year.

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British CDC

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Tanjong holds 55 percent shares of Pendekar Energy and Saudi company Aljomai Automotive Co owns the remaining.

CDC Globelec purchased the Haripur and Meghnaghat plants from US company AES and acquired the NEPC barge-mount power plant in 2003.

The Tanjong website says the company aims at a growth based on power generation and the deal will establish its presence in Bangladesh subject to government approval.

The completion of the proposed acquisition has been targeted for the third quarter of 2007.

Purchase body

FROM PAGE 16

Earlier, the purchase body rejected the Bogra project along with six other proposals for installation of trailer and skid mounted power plants citing faulty bidding processes.

Sources said, the government approved the Bogra power project to avoid any legal battle with the company GBB Limited as the Bangladesh Power Development Board has already signed a power purchase agreement with it. The government had no other option but to review its earlier decision, an official said.

Yesterday's meeting decisions also include filling up of Purbachal Housing Project of Rajuk. "Tk 62 crore will be spent for the project and the work has been given to 12 different groups," a cabinet division official said.

Another project of Tk 25 crore was approved to appoint three consultant firms for the Urban Health Care Project.

HC sets hearing

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years-old cases against the former premier.

Deputy Attorney General Golam Mohammad Chowdhury on Monday petitioned an HC bench for the hearing dates.

Earlier in 2003, the HC stayed proceedings of the cases in response to her appeals.

The now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed a case for irregularities in the MiG-29 purchase against Hasina and four others with the Teigaon Police Station on December 11, 2001. The following year it filed another graft case against her and five others with the same police station. The second case relates to frigate purchase.

During her stint as the prime minister between 1996 and 2001, the government procured eight MiG-29 fighters from Russia for the air force and a frigate from South Korea for the navy.

In the first information reports, the complainant alleged that the government had to incur a loss of Tk 447 crore in the buying of frigate and Tk 700 crore in eight MiG-29s.

In 2003, charges were pressed against Hasina and others in the two cases and charge sheets were submitted before the court.

The HC on May 16 set July 25 to hear the AL chief's petition for cancelling the proceedings in the four- and a-half-year old Meghnaghat Power plant graft case against her.

Forest boss held

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been keeping an eye on him for the last couple of days, he added.

The joint forces conducted a thorough search of the house and seized Tk 92.9 lakh, US\$1,300 and Indonesian rupees 3,000.

When the law enforcers asked the Osman about the money, he was silent for some time and then passed out.

The OC also said that they have information that Osman has a locker in the Dhanmondi branch of Standard Chartered Bank and they would take him there to check the locker.

The joint forces will interrogate the Forest Department head about his source of income, he added.

Bashundara

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He said the process is underway to get back another Tk 824 crore.

Earlier, the Anti-Corruption Commission asked Bashundara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan to submit his wealth statement suspecting him as a corrupt businessman. But, Sobhan did not comply and went into hiding.

Dhaka unhappy

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stress once again that our institutional mechanisms remain constantly engaged on this and other matters.

The Indian media reported that on May 27, Indian Union State Minister for Home Sriprakash Jaiswal told the press that ULFA is not only running camps in Bangladesh territories but is also being 'nourished' here.

Jaiswal was quoted by the Indian media as saying, "India is continuously putting pressure on the Bangladesh government to keep watch and contain activity of ULFA, but the counterpart government seems to be little reluctant or weak to cooperate."

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Jalil, Babar, Hashem

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leaders and businessmen are still under the joint forces' custody and undergoing interrogation. The sources also said the joint forces are preparing to file graft cases against the detainees.

Meanwhile, the joint forces also raided the residences of a number of political leaders, including BNP leader and former state minister Maj (ret'd) Kamrul Islam, Dhaka City AL Acting President AKM Rahmatullah, AL leaders and former lawmakers Abdul Hasnat Abdullah, Nure Alam Chowdhury Liton and former state minister Shahjahan Omar. None of the political leaders were present at homes at the time of the raids.

The joint forces members also searched the Gulshan house of Water Development Board engineer AKM Fazlur Rahman for three hours and seized a large amount of savings bond and money. Fazlur was not in the house during the raid.

Our Barisal and Patuakhali correspondents report: A joint forces team raided two residences of former Air Force chief Altaf Hossain in Patuakhali and seized a shotgun and a rifle, 99 bullets, and 970 pieces of saree and 160 pieces of lungi of the government relief materials. Altaf was held from his Gulshan residence around 3:40am.

Barisal Mayor Majibor Rahman Sarwar was picked up from his Gulshan residence at about 9:30am. The crack forces raided his residences in Gulshan and Barisal and the city corporation office and seized four bullets, Tk 4 lakh, gold ornaments weighing 50 tola and some documents.

Sarwar and his wife Nasima Sarwar were taken to the Gulshan branch of Dutch Bangla Bank and seized documents kept in their reserved lockers in the bank. The joint forces sealed the lockers. Nasima was later released while Sarwar was taken to Rab-3 camp.

JALIL, BABAR, HASHEM

Motijheel police produced AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Shafique Anwar at 8:15pm with a prayer for seven-day remand.

Investigation officer (IO) of the case and Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Motijheel Police Station Nasirul Alam mentioned in the forwarding report that Jalil accumulated a huge amount of wealth and money through corruption being the party general secretary. He had also been delivering provocative statements over the last few days to destabilise the country's political situation. So, he needs to be interrogated in remand.

The defence lawyers argued for cancellation of the remand prayer.

After hearing both the sides, the court granted a four-day remand for Jalil.

The same court also remanded Babar for four days after IO of the case and Gulshan Police Station OC Obaidul Haque produced him before it with a prayer for seven-day remand.

In the forwarding report, the IO mentioned that when he was in charge of the home ministry Babar acquired a huge amount of money and wealth by means of looting and corruption. Terming Babar corrupt and plunderer, the report said four firearms including an illegal one were recovered from his house during his arrest. He has caused serious damage to the country's economy and disrupted public safety, the report added.

Sub-Inspector Salahuddin of Gulshan Police Station submitted the forwarding report of Partex Group Chairman MA Hashem before the court seeking seven days' remand.

In the forwarding report, the IO mentioned that Hashem accumulated a huge amount of money and properties through abuse of power, irregularities and corruption. The report also accused Hashem of grabbing land properties.

The court granted four-day remand for him.

Jalil, Babar and Hashem were arrested under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Rules. There were also proposals for 30 days' detention for Babar and Hashem.

Our court correspondent reports: Gulshan police produced Altaf before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Shafique Anwar at 4:10pm.

In the forwarding report, the police mentioned that Altaf acquired a huge amount of money and properties through corruption and using influence when he was the commerce minister. Besides, he violated the provisions of the Emergency Power Rules and got involved in destructive activities.

The report said Altaf was arrested to restrain him from such activities.