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MORE CONFESSION

Babar cut \$10m Warid deal for Koko

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar spilled more beans as he told investigators yesterday that he had negotiated a \$10 million fast-track frequency allocation deal for Warid Telecom and the booty was shared by Arafat Rahman Koko and former BNP MP Ali Asgar Lobi.

Of the amount, \$9 million was given to former prime minister Khaleda Zia's younger son Koko and \$1 million to detained BNP leader Lobi who had close links with detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman and his Hava Bhaban.

Babar also revealed during interrogation that Koko and former finance minister Saifur Rahman's

son Tony took commission from a Chinese company in the name of giving it a contract for supplying telecommunications equipment. He, however, denied his involvement in the deal.



On the controversial purchase of 1,970 vehicles involving Tk 121 crore from the government coffers and a huge counterpart fund from a donor agency, he told the investigators that he did not go through the documents before signing the deal.

"It was my mistake. I even did not go through the file before signing it," Babar was quoted to have said during interrogation.

The former state minister claimed that he had no option but to approve the controversial vehicle purchase for various law enforcement departments "under pressure from the high-ups". Pacific Motors owned by former foreign minister M Morshed Khan was the prime beneficiary of the

purchase proposal.

Babar, who is now on a four-day police remand, said BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman was the main backer of Pacific Motors.

The government decided to procure the 1,970 cars ahead of the Saarc summit in the capital in 2005.

The police headquarters floated a tender in which 16 importers participated. But at the last moment, the authorities changed the conditions of bidding through a circular 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.

Sources said the former state

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The tube-well hooked up to a Wasa line releases filthy and stinky water. The photo was taken from Nazimuddin Road in Old Dhaka yesterday.

Ex-MP Gias, ex-power secy Akhter sued

Warrant against Kamal Ibne Yusuf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a graft case against former power secretary ANH Akhter Hossain and his wife while the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) filed two cases against former BNP lawmaker Mohammad Giasuddin.

An ACC official lodged the case against Akhter and his wife Naznin Banu with Uttara Police Station in

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PEACE STATUS

Bangladesh ranked 86th among 121 countries

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has been placed at number 86 of 121 countries in the first study to rank countries around the world as per their peacefulness and the factors that cause and sustain peace.

In South Asia, Bangladesh ranked second (after Bhutan) on the peace index.

The study, styled Global Peace Index, released Wednesday, was conducted by the Economist

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8 deceased Bangladesh peacekeepers honoured

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations has honoured eight deceased Bangladeshi peacekeepers with "Dag Hammarskjöld Medal Awards".

The peacekeepers sacrificed their lives during UN peacekeeping operations in Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan last year.

They are Lance Corporal SM Miraz Ahmed, Lance Corporal Abdul Halim, Private Kamrozaman Khan, Private Mohammed Miah, Private Md Mizanur Rahman, Lance Corporal Abdus Sattar, Private Amir Hossain and Lance Corporal Faruk Miah.

UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guehenno on Wednesday handed over the medals to Brig General Ilyas Iftikhar Rasul, defence adviser in Bangladesh permanent mission to the United Nations, at a ceremony at the UN Library auditorium in New York.

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Taskforce seizes Mufti Shahidul's luxury car

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) taskforce seized a luxury car belonging to former Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) lawmaker Mufti Shahidul Islam from Old Dhaka on Wednesday night.

Official sources said the taskforce with the help of police raided Liner Group of Industries at 21 Hazi Abdur Rashid Lane in Nayabazar and found the 4700cc Lexus car of the ex-lawmaker in the parking zone of the firm.

The taskforce seized the car

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KHALEDA'S OPTIONS

Pick reforms or retirement

SHAKHAWAT LITON

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia appears to be in a quandary whether to give in to the growing pressure for reforms both from within and outside her party or to quit politics.

She has been in virtual isolation as most of the senior leaders have opted to keep away from her during the present crisis situation.

They believe it is about time she relinquishes absolute power she holds over the BNP. Many of them in fact want the former prime minister to bow out of politics to pave the way for the reforms that the party needs badly, sources said.

On her part, things continue to slip with both of her sons now sued for extortion. Her elder son, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, has been detained since March 7 while the other one, Arafat Rahman, was not permitted to accompany her in a trip to Singapore that was later

cancelled.

Once acclaimed as an uncompromising politician, she is now desperate to negotiate an understanding with the authorities so they treat Tarique and Arafat leniently. That her younger son might as well be detained on charge of corruption has added to her anxieties about the future of her sons.

Sources say if she does not agree



to leave the chairperson's post to allow changes in the party, a number of graft cases might be filed against her.

Intelligence agencies are assembling information about financial irregularities that took place in different ministries particularly in the energy and power ministry under her leadership in the last five years, added the sources.

The government has already gathered information about her bank accounts to detect shady transactions, if there's any.

Besides, a few of the BNP chairperson's kin might be rounded up in the ongoing anti-graft drive that, many believe, will force her into tighter corners.

Against this backdrop, she is dithering over whether to leave the country or try to work her way out of troubled times.

Earlier, the BNP chief had reportedly agreed to go abroad with Arafat and the other family

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EXPORT POLICY ANNOUNCED

Agro, light engineering, IT get the thrust

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday announced a three-year Export Policy for FY07 to FY09 setting a target to diversify the export basket, create employment and alleviate poverty.

The policy included pharmaceutical products in the list of thrust sector and nine more products identified as special development sector.

"The government's main objective of the policy is to enhance export growth in order to alleviate poverty for reaching the millennium development goals," Finance and Commerce Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said while announcing the new policy at a press conference at the commerce ministry conference room.

Under the new export policy, agro-products and agro-processing items, light engineering

products including auto-parts and bicycles, shoes and leather products, software and ICT products, and home textile will be in the thrust sector.

Finished leather, frozen fish, fresh flower and foliage, jute products, textile items by indigenous people and diamond polishing are the new sectors added to the special development sector that already has handicrafts,

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Hasina asks AL leaders to provide legal support to held party men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the party leaders to provide necessary legal support to the party leaders and workers who have been arrested.

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ACC to submit charge sheets against Huda, Wadud next week

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will submit charge sheets against former minister Nazmul Huda, former BNP lawmaker Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, Awami League leader Pankaj Debnath and T&T CBA President Firoz Miah next week.

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Polls should be held as quickly as possible

Says US State Dept

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United States has reiterated that elections in Bangladesh should be held "as quickly as possible", but only after necessary electoral reforms take place and that a crackdown on corruption should not be "inconsistent with the rule of law".

Briefing the media at the State Department on Wednesday, Deputy Spokesman Tom Casey said: "We do want to see these

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POWER SECTOR IN NEXT FISCAL YEAR Govt for 33pc raise in budgetary allocation

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is proposing 33 percent increase in budgetary allocation in the next fiscal year for the development of the power sector.

The Economic Relations Division (ERD) is going to seek \$300 million from the World Bank (WB) for this purpose.

A total of Tk 3,700 crore has been proposed for power sector development in the coming fiscal year and it is the highest allocation of FY 07-08 as a single sector, planning ministry sources said.

The revised allocation for the power sector in the current fiscal year is Tk 2,779 crore, which is 6 percent less than that of the previous fiscal year.

"There is no doubt that the power sector is getting priority in budgetary allocation and it is much higher this time compared to allocations in recent few years," said a top official of the planning ministry.

He said allocation for the power sector was decreased by 0.47 percent in FY04-05 and it witnessed a slight increase (0.47 percent) in FY05-06.

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CA seeks WB help for power sector dev

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser to the Caretaker Government, Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday sought assistance from the World Bank (WB) for development of power sector, construction of Padma bridge, strengthening local government and improvement of agriculture sector.

The chief adviser placed the priority for development assistance when the visiting WB Vice-president for South Asia region,

Praful C Patel, made a courtesy call on him at his office.

It is the first visit of the multilateral donor agency to Bangladesh after Fakhruddin assumed the office of chief adviser on January 12.

Responding to Fakhruddin, the WB top executive assured of extending support, partnering with other development partners of Bangladesh, to help in implementing the development plans and programmes of the government.

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27TH BCS Call for fresh exams after PSC reform

SUBRANJITH DEARBATH

The cancelled viva voce of the 27th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations should be held afresh only after reforming the Public Service Commission (PSC) to ensure credibility and fairness, say ex-officials, academicians and candidates.

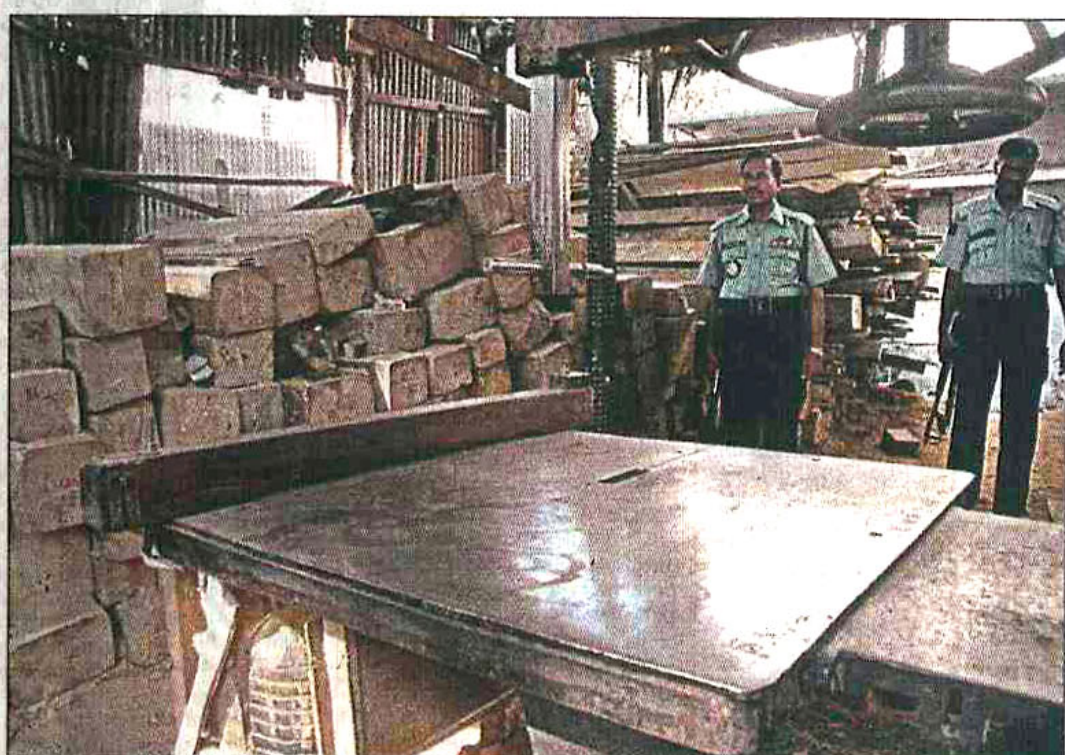
Talking to The Daily Star, they said that the PSC is still run by members and officials who are accused of foul play and anomalies which has bogged down all of the four BCS examinations, including 27th BCS, during the immediate past BNP-Jamaat alliance government rule.

Newly appointed PSC Chairman

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Erratum

The Daily Star on Wednesday ran a report headlined "Master manipulator of state power" that inadvertently mentioned the name of Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad as an official who was promoted for supporting Bangla Bhai. We regret the error.



Law enforcers seize huge quantity of timber belonging to detained Chief Conservator of Forest Osman Gani at a sawmill in Jigatala in the capital yesterday.

Gani's shenanigans

The forest boss who gobbled up trees

PINAKI ROY

The general impression about Osman Gani as a soft-spoken person and an academician notwithstanding, the chief conservator of forests never gave up making money by abusing power like his predecessors.

Gani allegedly launched a drive recently to collect money from different station officers and range officers in Khulna, Dhaka and Chittagong.

"Many range officers and station officers were recently due for transfer. So far I know, they gave the chief conservator huge money to stop their transfer and his wife received the money at home," said a forest official from Chittagong.

"Money flows in natural course to the chief conservator," a Forest Department high official said. "He collects money through the departmental chain to pay the minister and other high officials related to the department," said the official

who is also allegedly in Gani's chain.

Sources in the Forest Department said forest officials make money by destroying the forests.

High officials like the chief conservator take money for the transfers of the department staffs and providing jobs. They also take bribes from the check posts set up for the protection of the forests. Another means of making quick money is different development projects of the Forest Department, the sources added.

Sources said there are 25 lucrative posts of station officer in Rangamati, 20 in Chittagong, five in Sylhet, 10 in Mymensingh and Tangail, and eight in the Sundarbans.

Sources said at present the most money generating divisions are Chittagong North, Chittagong South, Sundarbans, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet and Dhaka. A lucrative

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