

Guns turn to Babar

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Despite a change in the government on January 11, 2007 not one of these regulatory institutions came to WTBH's aid, rather the true majority shareholders of the company in Bangladesh had to face legal harassment from the swindlers, the complaint added.

Sources said on June 12, 2000 WTH of Bermuda formed WorldTel Bangladesh Limited (WTBL) under a shareholders agreement signed between March 24, 2001 and July 5, 2001. WTH's Mauritius based subsidiary WTBH was to hold the majority of shares of WTBL.

On July 9, 2001 three Bangladeshi citizens formed a British Virgin Islands based company named World Communications Investments Inc (WCII), which acquired the minority share of WTBL. As representatives of the minority shareholder, Nayeem Mehtab Chowdhury, a Bangladeshi citizen with residency rights in the USA, and Mirza Baber Beg, a Pakistani citizen with residency rights in the UK, joined the board of directors of WTBL on September 22, 2001 as nominees of WCII.

According to the schedule of shares of WTBL issued on May 24, 2004, WTBH had 1,684 shares or 56.7 percent of the shares, and WCII had 1,287 shares or 43.3 percent of the shares of WTBL.

WCII managed to buy the shares of WTBH in spite of having no bank account in Bangladesh at the time, which is an illegal practice. And it was possible because Nayeem used the influence of the then telecom minister Mohammad Nasim and the then state minister for planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir to get the illegal deed done, according to sources.

BABAR AND OTHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN WCII
WTBL sources said after the change in government through the 2001 election, Nayeem suddenly became 'a good friend' of Babar using the connection of the former state minister's alleged flunkey Badal.

WTBH officials said in January 2005 Babar helped Nayeem get Tk 15 crore loan from Sonali Bank and Tk 31 crore loan from the National Bank of Pakistan, forging the signature of WTH Chairman also WTBH President Sam Pitroda.

When the fraud became public and a case was filed by other directors of WTBH, Babar ordered an investigation against the plaintiff instead of Nayeem, and managed a written final report from the police by virtue of being the state minister for home affairs, which stated that there were 'mistakes in the facts of the case', a WTBH official said preferring anonymity.

Babar arranged it to be accepted by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka too," the WTBH official said.

Nayeem withdrew loans from the banks despite his membership on the board of directors of WCII being suspended, stripping him of the right to trade in the company's shares.

But he managed to get everything as he wished with the help of Babar, the WTBH official said adding that Nayeem also used Babar's influence on the erstwhile BTRC chief Omar Faruq to illegally obtain a permission to import equipment and to release them from the customs without any hassle.

WTBH officials also alleged that \$3 million gathered by Nayeem, through forging the signature of Sam Pitroda, was siphoned offshore under the guise of equipment import through a fake company named Starley Ltd of Bahrain. He also arranged to inflate the prices of the equipment on the invoices to facilitate quick siphoning of the alleged stolen money.

Ex-premier Khaleda Zia's nephew Shareen Islam Tuhin was also allegedly involved in the process under a deal for buying the imported equipment from ZTE, a Chinese company, which he used to represent in Bangladesh.

"The siphoned amount of money could be brought back to Bangladesh if Nayeem and Babar could be interrogated properly," a WTBH official said.

BABAR TRANSFERRED OFFICIALS OF RJSCF
Other board members of WCII in a letter on July 12, 2005 withdrew their nominations for Nayeem and Beg for the board of directors of the company, and also dismissed the two as their nominees on the board of WTBL.

Despite the dismissal, Nayeem and Beg claimed that the board of WTBL had issued 3,55,000 additional shares of WTBL to WCII, making WCII the majority shareholder of WTBL with 99.5 percent of shares.

But according to section 155(1) of the Companies Act 1994, issuance of new shares is prohibited without the consent of a general meeting of all shareholders.

In February 2006 WCII tried to file with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSCF) the securities documents of the company regarding the loans taken from Sonali Bank and the National Bank of Pakistan, supposedly to buy equipment for WTBL.

But, RJSCF on February 28, 2006 rejected the application, stating that Nayeem at the time was not connected to WTBL at all due to his dismissal from the board of directors. This position of RJSCF however did not last for long, and it subsequently proceeded to register WCII as the 99.5 percent shareholder of WTBL, making it the controlling partner of the company.

Sources said when RJSCF refused to register WCII as the majority shareholder of WTBL, former state minister Babar, former commerce ministry adviser Barkat Ullah Bulu, and other vested interest groups close to Hawa Bhaban forced RJSCF to register WCII as the majority shareholder.

As the officials of RJSCF repeatedly refused to engage in illegal activities, they were quickly transferred with the influence of Babar, the sources added.

RJSCF sources said Babar then arranged appointments of new officials to RJSCF and the registration of WCII shares was completed within seven days.

RJSCF officials said Nayeem had no intention of doing business in Bangladesh, he just wanted to earn some quick illegal money which he did successfully.

BANKS' SILENCE ABOUT BABAR'S INFLUENCE
Sources said the banks, which provided large sums of loans to Nayeem without any proper justification, were influenced by some former lawmakers including Babar and some people close to Hawa Bhaban.

Pitroda, on learning of the forgery of his signature, wrote to Sonali Bank in a letter served on April 5, 2006 that he denounces the fraud and warned the bank that the majority shareholders had no knowledge of the loan facilities extended to Nayeem under the auspices of WTBL.

But, Sonali Bank did not carry out any investigation following Pitroda's letter.

A similar letter was sent to the National Bank of Pakistan on September 6, 2005 but that bank also did not carry out any investigation.

NAYEEM'S VERSION

Denying all allegations against Nayeem, one of his officials said the allegations submitted to the ACC are totally 'baseless' and 'unrealistic'.

He said the Bangladesh Bank repeatedly investigated the matter, but failed to find any financial crime.

The official also claimed that Nayeem invested Tk 73 crore in WTBL, and WTH invested only Tk 16 lakh, making Nayeem the majority shareholder of WTBL automatically.

He said if anyone demands the controlling share of the company he or she should go to a court to resolve the issue. He claimed that everything Nayeem owns is legal and proven to be so through investigations by different government authorities at different times.

EU Troika

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If the general elections can be held before the end of 2008...as early as possible."

The Troika team leader said that quick elections would also mean a quick withdrawal of the ban on indoor-politics, but "ban on political activities indoors should be lifted in a responsible and appropriate time before you can hold general elections."

He also said that there is a "chance to improve the democratic reality of Bangladesh in the coming months if the civil society and the government play together to aim for the quality that I have just described."

Home Ministry sources said in their meeting with the home secretary, the EU Troika delegation asked whether al-Qaeda exists in Bangladesh and inquired about militant activities here.

Touching on the human rights situation, Michaelis said, "When the government bases its power on a state of emergency, it is particularly important for the government to build trust," adding, "We were assured the government is willing to deliver."

He, however, observed that a country under the state of emergency has to be governed in a credible and convincing way, and reported cases of human rights violations should be investigated and the perpetrators should be brought to justice.

"We understand the government is looking for a 'speedy' way to achieve this and the EU stands by the government to provide assistance," Michaelis, who is the German Foreign Ministry's Director-General for Asian and Pacific Affairs, added.

US, Japan aim for flexible measures on climate change

AFP, HEILIGENDAMM, Germany

US President George W Bush said he and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed yesterday to work together to create a "flexible" framework to combat climate change.

Bush and Abe held talks ahead of the start of the Group of Eight summit of the leaders of the world's industrial powers. Climate change dominates the agenda but the United States has refused to agree German demands for fixed long term targets to cut emissions that cause global warming.

"As for the climate change issue... we agreed that Japan and the United States will cooperate in forming a practical framework," Abe told reporters after the meeting.

Bush said Washington and Tokyo would jointly take the lead in developing new technologies to reduce greenhouse gasses, while aiming at a "flexible" framework.

"The two leaders agreed to cooperate in seeking a forward-looking achievement during the G8 summit... on climate change," a Japanese government official said.

Hasina

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Referring to the 1996 caretaker government that had placed a budget for two months, she said the government could have given a short-time interim budget.

"Where and how will they place the budget?" she posed a question.

About an AL man's filing of the case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 27 others for the August 21 grenade attacks, Hasina said she does not know whether the complainant has any affiliation with her party. "I am not sure whether the name of the person has been included in the list of those who were wounded in the attack. I should see the list again," she said.

Badar Aziz Uddin, reportedly a worker of Cox's Bazar AL who was injured in the August 21 attacks, on Tuesday filed a case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka against 28 people, including Khaleda Zia, her son Tarique Rahman and BNP-led coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami on allegations of attacking an AL rally that left 24 people dead and many others injured.

Hasina criticised publication of news items based on the statements made by a few senior leaders of her party who have been recently arrested and interrogated by the joint forces.

When the top leaders of extremist outfit JMB were arrested, their statements were not published although people wanted to know it, she said, adding, "But this time the statements came out in CD format which is merely suspicious."

AL leaders Motia Chowdhury and Hasan Mahmud, among others, accompanied Hasina to Birdem.

CID starts

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said. "If their involvement is found, this case will be merged into the case filed earlier."

On August 22, 2004, police filed a case with Motiheel Police Station against 200 people in connection with the grenade blasts. Two general diaries (GDs) filed by AL leaders Abdul Jalil and Saber Hossain Chowdhury the same day were merged into the police case.

"We received the case documents last night (Tuesday night) from the court and started scrutinising it," said Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Paltan Police Station Farid Uddin.

The CMM's Court ordered the OC, also investigation officer (IO) of the case, to submit a report after investigation into the case is over.

The accused in the case filed by Babar include Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid, former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar, former BNP lawmakers Amanullah Aman, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, Mirza Abbas, Mosaddek Ali Falu, Barkat Ullah Bulu, Salahuddin Ahmed, Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, Helaluzzaman Talukder Lalu, Krishak Dal General Secretary Shahjahan Mian, Islami Bank Managing Director Nurul Islam and businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun.

The other accused are Jamaat leader Abdul Kader Mollah, Brig Gen (retired) Hannan Shah, the then National Security Intelligence (NSI) chief Maj Gen (retired) Rezzakul Haider, police chief Mdabbir Hossain Chowdhury, BNP leader and former minister Aminul Huq, Rajshahi City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, ex-additional IGP Faruq Ahmed, ex-DMP commissioner Khoda Bux, Islami Bank Chairman Abdul Halim, Shahidul Huq Jamal of Pirojpur, DCC Ward Commissioner and BNP leader Chowdhury Alam and AKM Ahsanul Tayab Zakir of Bogra.

The office of the Comptroller of Auditor General (CAG) brought in such irregularities under government's notice in 2000. Donors also raised the issue on several occasions.

M Hafizuddin Khan, a former CAG and also a former adviser to a caretaker government, termed it as a big financial irregularity. Such things create scopes for misuse of government resources, he added.

The former CAG said SoEs usually borrow money for their development projects from either the government or the donors. "But neither the SoEs nor the line ministries maintain proper documentation regarding their borrowings and returns."

The account handling system of individual SoEs is also not accurate, Hafiz viewed.

Citing an example, he said financial records of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority showed that it had Tk 22 lakh liabilities. But interestingly it paid off Tk 25 crore to the government.

"SoEs do not keep records of the loans they take from the government and development partners," Hafiz said.

He said the finance ministry itself did not have any mechanism to maintain such records. "Only an officer was assigned to keep the files and he did not have any computer."

"We also found irregularities in financial records of the Chittagong Port Authorities and the PDB. Their account systems were also not modern," Hafiz said.

The finance ministry findings show that PDB's actual liabilities are Tk 46,925 crore since 1972. Of which, principal amount is Tk 18,930 crore and interest is Tk 27,994 crore.

However, when contacted a PDB official said the amount of liabilities was only Tk 6,397 crore till June 06.

"We will inform the finance ministry to revise the DSL of the PDB," he said.

PDB sources said one of the reasons behind this huge difference in DSL estimation is that the PDB calculates the amount received from the donors according to dollar rate of the receiving period.

But the finance ministry calculates the liabilities according to the current dollar rate, added the PDB sources.

Mayor Minu lands

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requested them to include Nazrul and Milon in the college's governing body.

As Shamsul did not agree to do it, Nazrul, Milon and Sentu went to the college and demanded Tk 1 lakh toll on July 4 last year. They forcibly took away bricks worth Tk 25,000 and furniture worth Tk 13,000 from the college.

LOBI, OBAIDUL, MAMUN REMANDED

Lobi was placed on a three-day remand when police produced him before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka with a prayer for seven-day remand in the case filed against him on March 11 with Gulshan PS.

Complainant Zakaria Khan Julu accused Lobi of trespassing into his house, threatening on his life and plundering valuables from his house in Gulshan.

Lobi was arrested on February 5. Giasuddin Al Mamun, business partner of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, was also sent on a five-day remand in a criminal case.

Selim Malik, chairman of Japan Bangladesh Group, filed the case with the Gulshan PS on May 31 accusing Mamun and his two associates of extorting Tk 8.4 crore from him at different times between December 8, 2001 and December 20, 2006.

The other accused--Rajib Siraj Apu and Kawsar Zaman Bappi--have been absconding.

Mamun had earlier been remanded for 50 days in different cases.

AL leader Obaidul Quader was sent on a three-day police remand for further investigation into his anti-state activities. He was taken into custody in March and the court had sent him on detention under the Special Powers Act.

Obaidul was brought to the court from Kashimpur Jail where he had been put after his arrest on March 8.

CASE AGAINST BABAR
Our Correspondent in Netrakona reports, rice trader Mushfiqur Rahman of Khaliajuri in Netrakona filed an assault case with a district magistrate's court accusing Lutfuzzaman Babar and 36 others including Babar's assistant personal secretary Mirja Haider.

In the case statement, the complainant said Babar forced him to withdraw the nomination paper he had submitted as an independent candidate to contest the general election in 2007 from Netrakona 4 constituency.

He also said on December 26 last year Babar and the other accused confined him to a house in Khaliajuri and asked him to withdraw the nomination paper so that Babar could win the election uncontested.

Babar also demanded Tk 1 lakh from Mushfiq for his release. As he failed to pay the toll, Babar and his cohorts beat him up.

The complainant also mentioned that Babar's associates, using Babar's influence and assistance, made crores of taka through terrorist activities, extortion and misappropriation of government property in the area during the five-year tenure of the immediate past government.

CASE AGAINST RAHMAT ALI
A Correspondent in Gazipur reports, retired army lance corporal Mohammad Ziarat Hossain of Dainikini village under Kaliakoir filed a case yesterday against former AL lawmaker Advocate Rahmat Ali and five others.

The case was filed with Cognizance Court-3 in Gazipur.

One of the accused in the case is Mujibur Rahman Yasin -- the one who earlier on Sunday filed a case with the same court against BNP standing committee member Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqi. The four other accused are Liton, Abdul Wahab, Abdul Hakim and Rafiq Miah.

In his complaint, Ziarat alleged that the accused patronized by

advocate Rahmat Ali intimidated him on different occasions.

When Hossain wished to make peace with the accused, they demanded Tk10 lakh from him. Hossain made a payment of Tk 1.15 lakh to Rahmat Ali at the residence of Mujibur Rahman Yasin on July 18, 2003.

As he was unable to pay the rest of the toll, the criminals forcefully constructed a road over Hossain's paternal property.

Hossain said he did not dare to talk about this matter publicly earlier as Rahmat Ali was a member of parliament.

Magistrate Humayun Kabir ordered the officer in charge of Kaliakoir Police Station to take necessary actions after investigating the matter.

Meanwhile, the charge-hearing of a graft case against former Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim could not be held Wednesday as the defence counsel sought more time to start the hearing, reports UNB.

Seeking two weeks' time, Anisul Huq, the defence counsel for Nasim, told the special anti-graft court that the hearing should start in presence of the co-accused in the case. He informed the court that the co-accused, now on bail, left for Canada for treatment.

But public prosecutor of the Anti-Corruption Commission opposed the defence counsel's plea.

After hearing both sides, Judge Shahed Nooruddin of the makeshift court set up at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, fixed today (Thursday) for order on the matter.

According to the case, the then telecommunications minister Nasim through abuse of power allowed WorldTel Holdings Limited to install 3 lakh digital telephones in the country without floating any tender.

Meanwhile, the army-led joint forces yesterday picked up SM Shahjahan Kabir, general secretary of the Fourth Class Employees Union of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), from the hospital compound.

The reason why Shahjahan was picked up could not be known immediately.

Hospital sources said Shahjahan has wealth worth around Tk 1 crore and allegedly earned a huge amount of money through appointing a good number of people in the DMCH in connivance with authorities in exchange for money.

Only 50 responds

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respond to it or not. Even the staffs and employees, who have completed 25 years in service, are so far not willing to take the offer, sources said.

Only those, who have a few months left to complete their total service tenure, have decided to leave under the VRS, the sources added.

The trend towards responding to the scheme would be clear within the next week, Biman officials said.

On Tuesday, Biman Bangladesh Airlines offered the VRS in order to downsize its staff to 3,400 by axing about 1,500 current employees.

The scheme is part of the government plan to turn the national flag carrier into a public limited company (PLC) and therefore to make it a healthy and profitable commercial venture.

The Biman employees interested in taking the benefits under the VRS will have to apply in a prescribed form by June 20, a circular said.

The Biman authorities, however, did not mention what actions they would take if they do not get desired response under the VRS.

6 killed as 2 buses collide in Savar

UNB, Savar

At least six people died and 30 others were injured as two passenger buses collided on the Dhaka-Aricha highway here yesterday evening.

Witnesses said a Dhaka-bound bus from Bogra and a Manikganj-bound bus from Dhaka collided head-on near the BPATC in Savar at about 6:45pm, killing five on the spot and injuring 30 others.

The injured were rushed to different clinics in Savar. Of them, one succumbed to his injuries at Rabeya clinic. Identities of the dead could not be known.

Police seized both the buses, but their drivers and helpers managed to flee.

Huji boss Hannan

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Deposition of a witness was recorded before a magistrate's court in Sylhet May 31 while Sharif and Ripon gave confessional statements before Magistrate Nure Alam Siddique in Sylhet on October 16, 2006, the IO added.

Sources say they in their confessional statements said they carried out the grenade attack on the British high commissioner. They also admitted to their involvement in the grenade attack on Gulshan Centre premises in Sylhet on August 2004, the sources added.

They said they received a message on May 21, 2004 morning from Huji leader Abu Abdullah about the high commissioner's visit to Hazrat Shahjalal Shrine in Sylhet. Kajal, later on, instructed them to carry out the operation over cellphone. Ripon arrived at the shrine with the grenade and Bipul joined him there.

Sources say they confessed to hurling the grenade at the high commissioner after Juma prayers when he was near the main gate of the shrine.

They said Mufti Hannan thanked them after their mission.

The blast left three, including police sub-inspector Kamal Uddin, dead and 70 others including the British high commissioner wounded. Investigators from Scotland Yard visited the shrine several times to probe the incident.

The then SP of Sylhet was suspended and withdrawn on charge of negligence of duty in making security arrangements for the high commissioner months after the attack. The OC of Sylhet Police Station was also withdrawn.

Prof Yunus

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president to discuss at the G8 Summit setting up of a micro-finance fund for Africa, which is a priority area for Germany.

He said in order to make globalisation meaningful, the industrialised countries should open up their markets for the poor countries.

"Garment export from Bangladesh has been a direct route out of poverty for two million women in Bangladesh today," he said adding, "If export of textiles to the United States could be made duty-free for Bangladesh, a facility already available to LDCs in the Caribbean and Africa, then millions more women could also come out of poverty."

Yunus thanked Germany as the president of the European Union for allowing duty-free access of all Bangladeshi exports to its market.

On climate change, he mentioned that Bangladesh would be one of the countries to be greatly affected by continued rise in global warming.

The founder of Grameen Bank said it is important for the industrialised countries to understand that the actions and lifestyles in the rich countries are directly affecting the lives of millions in the poor countries.

The German president told the Nobel laureate that he would like to continue the discussions with him on globalisation and the environment over the coming months.

Afterwards, Yunus was the chief guest at the opening of the "German Week for the Environment" at Bellevue Castle. Over 1,000 high officials and representatives of NGOs and media were present at the function.

The main theme of the weeklong exhibition is state of the art environmental technology and renewable energy, with possibility of application in developing countries such as Bangladesh.

No banner

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really bad and many of us are now planning to change our fields."

Visiting several well-known sound system houses including the Habib Sound, Taranga Sound and Royal Mike, it was learnt that none of them have got a single customer this year. The shop of Taz Mike, another famous sound system house, was found closed.

An employee of the Royal Mike said nowadays they do not get more than one or two customers per day. "We used to get around 10 bookings on the day before the announcement of the budget. But we have not got a single booking this time," he said.

350 opposition activists arrested ahead of anti-Musharraf rally

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani police have detained around 350 opposition party activists in the latest attempt to muzzle criticism of embattled President Pervez Musharraf, officials said yesterday.

The arrests were made ahead of demonstrations planned today against Musharraf's move to oust the head of the country's Supreme Court, Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry.

Rattled Pakistani authorities have responded to the huge pro-democracy movement that has emerged to support Chaudhry with a mounting crackdown on opposition groups and the media.

"The government is acting like a mad elephant," said Nazir Dhoki, a spokesman for the Pakistan People's Party of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

A senior interior ministry official told AFP around 350 people had been detained for "violating the government ban on street protests throughout Punjab province."

The government earlier this year imposed a ban on all gatherings of five or more people in Punjab, Pakistan's most populous region and its political heartland.

Officials said some 200 were held on Monday and Tuesday with another 150 detained overnight and early yesterday. Most of the arrests were made in the provincial capital Lahore, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad and Multan.

Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz defused some tensions by ordering the immediate withdrawal of a police complaint against 200 journalists who protested curbs on the media in Islamabad on Monday, an official statement said.

A senior lawyer meanwhile filed an appeal in the Supreme Court against a decree issued by Musharraf on Monday granting tough new powers to the body that

regulates the electronic media.

Lawyer Zafarullah Khan's petition said the people of Pakistan were "stunned" by the measures.

The rules came into force as three private television stations said the government had blocked their transmissions because of their coverage of rallies addressed by Chaudhry.

The chief justice, who on Saturday told some 25,000 supporters that they had the support of the people of Pakistan, has become a focal point for opposition to Musharraf's dual role as president and army chief.

The protests turned violent in the southern city of Karachi on May 12