

Sacked Pak judge gets court boost

Faces new charges

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's top judge won the first round of his legal battle with President Pervez Musharraf Monday, but the government hit back by threatening new misconduct charges against him.

The Supreme Court formally allowed Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry to contest his suspension by military ruler Musharraf on March 9 – a challenge that government lawyers have argued against strenuously.

Chaudhry has fought his ouster both in the courts and also in the streets, leading rallies and sparking an opposition movement that presents key US ally Musharraf with the biggest crisis of his eight years in power.

The Supreme Court in May suspended an inquiry by a panel of judges into the charges against the chief justice, after he alleged that it was biased and that he should not be suspended during the process.

The court has been listening to legal arguments for the past month about whether to admit some two dozen petitions including Chaudhry's. The others have been filed by lawyers.

"We will now only hear and decide the petition of Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry," presiding

Judge Khalilur Rehman Ramday said.

"In a sense it is a victory for us that they have started hearing the petition. We were 99.9 percent sure that they would not reject it," Tariq Mahmood, senior counsel for the chief justice, told AFP.

Chaudhry denies charges that he got a senior police job for his son and that he used official cars and helicopters that he was not entitled to.

Critics allege that Musharraf wants to sideline the chief justice to eliminate legal obstacles to his reelection as president-in-uniform, most likely in September.

The constitution says he should quit as army chief this year.

Law Minister Wasi Zafar however said that the government would file a second set of allegations against Chaudhry, because the judge's lawyers had politicized the issue instead of going through the courts.

"It has become the duty and constitutional obligation of the government to file a fresh reference (complaint)," Zafar said. "Total responsibility for the second reference against the chief justice lies with his lawyers."

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Falu took Tk 50cr

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had to be given to have them removed from the tender.

He said that the group was supposed to give Tk 20 crore more to fund BNP's election campaigns.

He allegedly told questioners that Tarique Rahman was supposed to get 20 percent of the whole deal since the lease of the flyover was given for 25-30 years instead of 15 years, which would have given the company handsome profit after recovering the investment.

Sources claimed that he told investigators the shareholders of the deal used fake names to avoid problems in the future. For example, Tarique and Mamun have 50 percent share of Etv. But their names would not be found in papers.

The governments of Pakistan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia contributed a total of Tk 300 crore to immediate past premier Khaleda Zia's election fund, with each of the states contributing Tk 100 crore, according to the confessions of former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar.

Babar, who is being interrogated by the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI), also divulged that the Kuwaiti Ameer gave Khaleda the money during her visit to that country immediately before she relinquished power.

The former home ministry boss is currently being quizzed by the TFI. The joint forces arrested him from his Gulshan residence on May 28.

Sources said the former state minister for home also told the interrogators that the former premier's parliamentary affairs adviser Salauddin Quader Chowdhury kept the Pakistan government's Tk 100 crore contribution with himself. Babar added that two businessmen also knew about the contributions the former PM received from the governments of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Intelligence officials earlier picked up one of the two businessmen and interrogated him for quite a long time on the matter. Sources said during the interrogation the businessman confirmed that the alleged transactions had taken place.

Babar also told the interrogators that Khaleda looked for people to keep the money with them when she was at the helm of the country. The former home ministry boss said his brother Golam Rabban opened up an FDR account of Tk 20 crore under the names of five to six companies, a portion of which Babar invested in his fishing business. Later, he came to know that the money came from Warid Telecom.

He also told the interrogators that two bighas of land was bought at Shantinagar in the capital under the names of Tarique Rahman and his younger brother Arifat Rahman Koko, but it was propagated that the land had been bought under BNP's name to set up its office.

SKIMMING OFF FRESH PURCHASE OF TELECOM EQUIPMENT

Quoting the former home ministry boss, sources said Arifat Rahman Koko took US \$20 lakh to \$30 lakh from a Chinese company in exchange for letting it win a tender bid for supplying telecommunications spare parts to Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board. Former finance minister Saifur Rahman's son Babu also received a share of the bribe.

GETTING RICH FROM PURCHASE OF FIREARMS

Babar also admitted to being involved in corruption centring purchase of firearms for Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police during the immediate past BNP rule. In the face of interrogation Babar said Hawa Bhaban took a bribe of around Tk 2 crore at the rate of US \$100 per firearm. He also told the interrogators that a former home secretary stayed in a five star hotel in Pakistan during a tour there for buying sub-machineguns for Rab. He also said such activities were being carried out ignoring government rules and regulations.

EMBEZZLING FROM PURCHASE OF WIRELESS EQUIPMENT

Babar recovered two guns, two Kata rifles and 10 rounds of bullets from the spot.

Babar admitted that during the last five years wireless equipment worth Tk 30 crore were bought for police and Tk 10 crore of that went into the pockets of the corruptionists. A purchase made in 2003-04 fiscal included 500 FM wireless sets and 1,000 batteries. In a similar fashion Tk 2.5 crore was misappropriated in a purchase of 150 wireless base station sets. There was also corruption in purchases of wireless repeaters for Khulna police.

FLEECING MACHINE READABLE PASSPORT PROJECT

International tenders were invited for making machine readable passports. A German company won the tender bid through a secret transaction between the company and Arifat Rahman Koko. However, former finance minister M Saifur Rahman took a stand against the deal creating legal complexities. Later the matter was resolved by the mediation of Saifur Rahman's son Naser Rahman, who is currently in detention for alleged corruption. Babar however told the interrogators that at the beginning Saifur Rahman was also in support of the deal.

LAND GRAB IN SAVAR

Babar also informed the interrogators that he leased 10 acres of land in Savar illegally. He said he let a Thai company get the lease for orchid farming, a 50 percent share of which he holds.

HELICOPTERING AT GOVT'S EXPENSE

During interrogation Babar said he went to Netrakona 20 times on personal visits on government helicopters while he was at the helm of the home ministry. The trips caused the government to lose Tk 8 lakh. He went to the same district 30 to 35 more times by other means and billed the government for the expenses, he said adding that he should not have claimed his personal trips as government ones.

OPERATIONS

Babar also told the interrogators that he was the second-in-command of the PBPC's Arif-Badal faction. He was also accused in at least 11 cases including eight for murders with Pabna, Rajbari and Manikganj police stations. Rab sources added.

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The incident took place at around 6:00 pm besides a madrasa at Sagarkandi under Shujanagar upazila of Pabna.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Rab-12 raided Sagarkandi madrasa area where the PBPC activists were holding a meeting.

Sensing Rab's presence, the activists opened fire on them. Rab returned fire killing the two on the spot.

Three Rab members were also injured in the incident. They are Md Sayeed Saifullah, Khairul Islam and Md Abdus Sattar.

Rab recovered two guns, two Kata rifles and 10 rounds of bullets from the spot.

2 outlaws killed in 'shootout' with Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two leaders of the Janajudhda faction of the outlawed Purba Bangla Communist Party (PBPC) were killed in an encounter with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday afternoon.

Three Rab members were also injured during the gunfight, sources said.

The dead are Salam alias Mamun, 28, of Shardi village, and Manir alias Monirul, 26, of Gaishbari Atikula upazila.

According to Rab sources, Mamun was the second-in-command of the PBPC's Arif-Badal faction. He was also accused in at least 11 cases including eight for murders with Pabna, Rajbari and Manikganj police stations. Rab sources added.

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SSC results

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The results of secondary certificate examination under Technical Education Board and Madrasa Education Board will also be published simultaneously.

The examinees can collect their results from their respective institutions or examination centres at 5:00pm.

Besides, examinees having GrameenPhone, Banglalink, Aktel, CityCell and Teletalk connections can get results through SMS (short message service).

Candidates have to type RES<space>first three letters of their respective boards<space>roll number and then send to 2777 for getting results through SMS.

For example, an examinee of Dhaka Board with roll number 459852, has to type RES DHA 459852 and then send to 2777.

An agreement between the education boards along with Bangladesh Madrasa Shikha Board and TTBC limited, a mobile phone content provider, was signed to publish the results through SMS.

Meanwhile, candidates having GrameenPhone and Aktel connections can register their names earlier to get results as soon as these are published. According to this service, examinees will receive their results automatically soon after the result is published.

Candidates have to type RG<space>first three letters of the respective board<space>roll number and then send to 2777.

SSC and Dakhil examinees can also get results at www.education.gov.bd and vocational candidates at http://result.bteb.gov.bd.

The heads of the educational institutions have to collect result sheets from the secretary of the respective examination centres.

No result will be available at the education boards, education ministry or newspaper offices, according to a press release.

This year 796,073 examinees including 414,812 male and 381,261 female were registered for SSC exams under seven education boards. A total of 169,387 examinees took Dakhil examinations while 64,425 candidates sat for SSC vocational examination.

Lightning kills

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Bakkhali river, Sadar Upazila Nirbhaba Officer Belal Haidar said.

Another shrimp farm worker Mohammed Khorsheed Alam, 18, of Thaounkhali village in Sadar upazila was also at work in PM khali when lightning killed him at around 1:00pm.

Others killed in lightning are Zino Akter, 26, of Kutubiyapara under sadar upazila, Haripada Jaladas, 35, Abdus Salam, 42, Mohammad Ismail, 20, and an unidentified baby in Fashiyakhali village in Chakaria upazila of the district.

In two separate incidents in Jhenidah, thunder struck five people and killed them on the spot Sunday evening, reports a correspondent.

The dead are Hashibul, 20, Golzer Hossain, 45, Shariful Islam, 40, Mizan, 35 and Jhantu, 35 in Harinakundo and Kotchandpur upazilas.

All of them were working in the fields when they were struck by lightning.

The injured were rushed to Kotchandpur Health Complex.

Our correspondent from Mymensingh says: Two people, including a baby, were killed and two others were injured when bolts hit them at Kawrat in Gouripur upazila yesterday morning.

The dead are Md Abdur Rashid, 35, and Russell, 1. The two were struck by lightning and died on the spot when they were catching fish in a nearby water body, police and local sources said.

The injured in the incident were admitted at a local hospital.

Two people died on the spot yesterday evening when a thunderbolt struck a house at Pashim Uria in Noakhali, reports a correspondent.

The dead are Zafar, a carpenter, and Nurunnahar, a housewife.

Zafar was on his way home from his workplace and took shelter in Nurunnahar's house as rain started, Chairman of Noakhali Union Advocate Abdur Rahman said.

An injured in the incident Raza Mia is now receiving treatment at Noakhali General Hospital.

Biman staff

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make it a healthy and profitable commercial venture.

While Biman managing director (MD) Dr MA Momen expressed satisfaction over the number of respondents to the VRS so far, some Biman high officials termed the response 'poor.'

"If the VRS does not get the desired response, the Biman authorities may think alternative steps to axe officials and employees," they said. They, however, did not elaborate.

Many Biman officials and staff said that they would take some more days to decide about responding to VRS.

The VRS offer ends on June 20.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has finalised Memorandum of Association (rules and regulations of Biman), Articles of Association (terms and conditions) and ordinance, under which Bangladesh Biman Corporation would turn into Bangladesh Airlines Limited, sources said.

The proposal has been placed before the chief adviser, sources said.

City of death

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submerged with many residents taking shelter on roofs or the higher floors of buildings. Last night the met office forecast more rain.

Police, army, firefighter and volunteers struggled all day to find survivors, but the heavy rainfall, flooding and a lack of equipment hampered their efforts. People living near hills in and around the city were evacuated due to fears of further mudslides.

Yesterday evening Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Mohibul Rahman said the number of confirmed deaths had reached 79, but unofficial sources put the figure above 80. More than 89 injured people were admitted in the Chittagong Hospital with severe injuries, official sources said.

The divisional commissioner further said that all the examination of HSC, Technical and Madrasa Board scheduled to be held today have been postponed for the students of Chittagong district.

The economic disruption was extensive with the country's largest port closed and the city's industries brought to a standstill. Shop owners, businesses and householders could do little to protect their property and possessions from the torrent of muddy water. Kalurghat Radio Station was forced to suspend its broadcasts as its headquarters were submerged.

Mostafa Kamal, an official of Utsha a non-government organisation, said that he and his team were conducting rescue operations at 6:30 pm at Deverpar. "We had recovered eight bodies and rescued 19 injured persons from the debris," he said.

"The girls came out of the bus and tried to save themselves by holding whatever they could reach. Sensing the danger, a friend and me asked them to grab our hands. Five girls responded while three tried to grip a small wall. Suddenly, a strong wave loosened their grip and they were washed away."

The met office said the monsoon, that officially began on Friday and is expected to last until mid-September, is unusually powerful at the moment due to the effects of a sea storm in the Bay of Bengal. In Chittagong the met office recorded a total of 227 mm of rainfall in the twenty-four hours till