

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

judge Khalilur Rahman 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 politicised 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."

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 Kuwait 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 Rabbani 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 bignas of land was bought at Shantinagar in the capital under the names of Tarique Rahman and his younger brother Arafat Rahman Koko, but it was propagated that the land had been bought under BNP's name to set up its office.

SKIMMING OFF FROM PURCHASE OF TELECOM EQUIPMENT

Quoting the former home ministry boss, sources said Arafat 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 faceoff 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 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 Arafat 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.

2 outlaws killed in 'shootout' with Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two leaders of the Janajudhdha faction of the outlawed Purbia Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) 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 Shardiari village, and Manir alias Moniruddin, 26, of Goaisbari of Ataikula upazila.

According to Rab sources, Mamun was the second-in-command of the PBCP'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.

Manir was accused in eight cases including six for murders, added the Rab sources.

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

Acting on a tip off, a team of Rab-12 raided Sagarkandi madrasa area where the PBCP 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 Sayed Saifullah, Khairul Islam and Md Abdus Sattar.

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

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 Shikkha 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>1st three letters of the respective board<space>roll number then send to 2777.

SSC and Dakhil examinees can also get results at www.education-board.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 Nirbahi Officer Belal Haidar said.

Another shrimp farm worker Mohammed Khorshed 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 Kutubdiyapara 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 Jhantui, 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 village 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 thunder-bolt 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

FROM PAGE 1

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 Mokhesur 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 Cantonment 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.

Apart from the landslides the sheer power of the water took many lives in the city.

Md Jasim Uddin, supervisor of a factory at Nasirabad Industrial Area, saw a bus with eight young garment workers trapped inside floating near a large canal.

"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 the 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

3pm.

As many as twenty-three persons were killed in a landslide which hit houses at Lebu Bagan of Chittagong Cantonment under Hathazari upazila bordering the city, police said.

Eleven persons were killed when a wall collapsed on some thatched houses at Power Colony on railway land at Pahartali under Doublemooring thana.

The collapse of a huge chunk of earth on twelve-thatched houses at the bottom of a hill at Garbibulha Shah Mazar adjoining Kusumbing area left seven persons, including five children, dead at Lalkhan Bazar under the city's Khulshi thana.

Seven persons were buried alive in a landslide at Sekandar colony of Chittagong cantonment area under Hathazari upazila. Another landslide killed five persons at a slum at Taragata area under city's Bayezid police station.

Five member of a family were killed in a landslide that hit a tin shed house near the Shaheed Minar inside the campus of Chittagong University. Two were killed in landslide in Lalkhan Bazar Matijharna with two more people washed away in Panchlaish thana.

Mostafa Kamal, an official of Utsaha a non-government organisation, said that he and his team were conducting rescue operations at 6:30 pm at Deverpur. "We had recovered eight bodies and rescued 19 injured persons from the debris. But the rescue operation is being hampered because of the torrential rainfall," he said.

"Eight houses at the foot of the hill were buried at 8:00 am. So far we have heard from the family members that at least 15 others are still buried under the debris," he added.

The rainfall knocked out seven power substations in the city although five of the substations were able to resume operations in the afternoon.

The government announced Tk 9 lakh and 200 metric tons of food grains to provide instant relief and support to the affected people, while the district administration distributed dry food.

materials of Tk 3 crore and valuable machineries worth Tk 20 crore in the three factories," said Farhad Gani, an official of Clifton Group.

"We were preparing for a large shipment due next month when the flooding started dealing a serious blow to us," Gani added.

Most factories and industrial units located in Nasirabad and Sagorka areas also suffered financial losses due to inundations, sources said.

Rainwater also flooded warehouses of wholesale commodity markets at Khatunganji, Chaktai and Asadganji.

It is feared that the inundation will damage a large quantity of daily essentials like rice, pulse and sugar that were stored in the warehouses, causing a loss of several crores of taka.

Sagor Ahmed, a leader of Khatunganj Baboshayee Samity, said business activities came to a total halt at traditional business centres and they fear a huge damage to goods as many of the warehouses were flooded with knee-high to waist-high water.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury strongly criticised Chittagong City Corporation for its failure to maintain an effective drainage system in the city.

Apart from its failure to dredge the Chaktai canal it also indulged in constructions of a huge number of structures blocking roads and drains resulting in inundations, landslides and ultimately loss of lives and properties, alleged the CCCI president.

Army chief

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country has moved one step forward. And, in the future, the country will have to be taken further ahead with the cooperation of all," added General Moeen, whose troops are playing the pivotal role in the caretaker government's ongoing campaign against corruption.

Regarding the voter identity cards, he said the preparation of voter ID began on June 10 and a citizen would be benefited in his life by using his or her ID.

"During the preparation of voter ID, a person is to supply all information. As a result, the government will not face big trouble to know about any voter," the army chief told the function.

"Any government officer will get the information of any voter at any time. At this, a voter can easily get his passport. The passport authorities will be able to issue passport easily by collecting information through the voter-ID number of the person concerned."

About the bank, General Moeen, who is also the chairman of the bank, said as this bank belongs to Sena Kalyan Sangstha, many people air suspicion about it and think this bank could be different from other banks. "This is mere suspicion. Trust Bank works like other commercial banks."

Giving details of the services and facilities provided by the bank, he said the bank's profit is used for the welfare of the country's helpless people. "Therefore, it is the responsibility of all to take the bank forward."

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"Rainwater submerged raw-

Mayor Minu

FROM PAGE 1

Minu went into hiding hours after he was released on bail on Sunday afternoon. The police had orders from the headquarters to arrest him again following his bail that day and Minu was allegedly tipped off about it by some police officials.

He managed to dodge a group of police tailing him by frequently changing vehicles on his way to hiding.

Later in the night, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members raided his two houses at Shalbagan and Bhadra residential areas several times in search of him.

At around 1:00am, Minu phoned several local journalists and informed them that he was surrendering to police the next morning, as he would be put on 'one-month detention.'

From nightlong hiding, the mayor suddenly appeared at his office at around 9:30am.

Senior police officials, including RMP Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mahbubur Rahman, rushed to the mayor's office soon after Minu called them up on phone, sources in city corporation public relations office said.

Police officials had talks with Minu for over an hour before he was taken to Boalia Police Station.

Talking to The Daily Star, RMP DC Mahbubur Rahman explained that Minu was signing some important office files and handing over his duties.

Following directives of high-ups, police sent a proposal to the home ministry for putting him on detention, he informed.

Listed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) as one of the corrupt people, Minu was held on June 6 over an extortion case with Rajpara Police Station.

BCIC to import

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Ministry of Food to support its food procurement. These bags will be purchased from Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).

Finance adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, who chaired the meeting, briefed reporters on the decisions of the meeting.

The committee also approved the appointment of an Australian consulting firm, Aus Health, as the lowest bidder, for establishing a programme support office (PSO) under government's Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Programme (HNPS) assisted by the World Bank.

Advisers to the caretaker government and senior officers concerned were present at the meeting.

Mittal

FROM PAGE 16

When asked whether the Bol is capable of handling such a multi-billion dollar investment proposal, Executive Chairman of Bol Md Nazrul Islam said this proposal is not as complex as it was in the Tata's investment proposal.

"We hope the Bol is capable of handling the investment proposal with its current capacity," Nazrul Islam said.

The group's local agent GRH Bangladesh Limited arranged the programme.

Capital machinery

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maize seeds, barley, cane and beet sugar, rock phosphate and sulphur, LP gas, petroleum bitumen in both bulk and drum, drugs including that for malaria, cancer and life saving antibiotics, waste cotton, fistula needles and artificial joints.

Potato seeds, wheat seeds, animal feed, vegetable materials, methionine, chemical fertiliser, sheath contraceptives, pickled, wet blue and crake leather, sprayer used in farming, power tiller, computer related equipment, software and modem may get relief from duty at import and production level.

The finance adviser in his budget speech mentioned only 20 items that are to be exempted from earlier turnover tax and put under VAT net. But according to the NBR's draft SRO, the VAT net will cover 65 new items and heads.

These include mineral water, hotel and restaurant, cigarettes and biri, toilet soap, decorator and caterer, garage and workshop of motor vehicles, dockyard, construction firm, warehouse, port, advertising agency, press, auction house, land developer, building construction firm, telephone, teleprinter, telex, fax or internet organisation, SIM card distributor, freight forwarder, clearing and forwarding house, community centre, film studio, survey institution, cinema hall, film maker, furniture shop, Wasa, goldsmith and silver jewellery maker, insurance agency, courier and express mail service, medical centre, pathology laboratory, beauty parlour, consultancy and supervisory firm, lease agency, audit and accounting firm, shipping agents, air conditioned bus, train and launch services and suppliers.

President, CA

FROM PAGE 1

prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls.

They asked the officials concerned to ensure proper treatment of the injured and carry out operation for relief and rehabilitation.

Sanctions fail on Myanmar

Says Asean chief

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

A decade of economic sanctions has failed to push military-ruled Myanmar towards democracy and nations have to find another way to engage the country, a top Southeast Asian official said yesterday.

The United States and the European Union earlier this year renewed sanctions first introduced about 10 years ago against Myanmar over rights violations, including the continued detention of pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

But Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) secretary general Ong Keng Yong said sanctions were not working since member Myanmar was largely immune to them.

"These kinds of sanctions and isolation does not work ... They are happy being isolated because they are left alone to do whatever they want to do," Ong told reporters at the sidelines of the Asia Oil and Gas Conference here.

"What we are saying is perhaps we should look at some other ways of doing it instead of just (keeping) on applying sanctions," he said.

Myanmar's junta extended Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest by another year late last month, prompting condemnation from the United States, the United Nations and European and Asian nations.

The 61-year-old Nobel peace laureate has spent more than a decade confined to her home. Her party won a landslide victory in 1990 elections but the junta never allowed it to take office.

"Even if you pull out everybody, economic investors, from Myanmar, they are not going to collapse simply because their two big neighbours will be ready to sustain them," Ong said in apparent reference to China and India.

China and India have been criticised for keeping silent over Myanmar's rights abuses.

Ong also said Myanmar would never allow itself to be seen as bowing to international pressure to release the democracy icon.

"That will never happen. You have to ... find a face-saving way out," he said.

Myanmar, which joined Asean in 1997, has embarrassed the regional

bloc by steadfastly refusing to introduce democratic reforms.

Ong said the 10-member grouping would continue to engage Myanmar, arguing economic development and growth may help the country to come around.

"This is the sad thing about Asean, the only leverage we have is that Myanmar is a member of Asean. We hope to pressure it to do more," he said.

Ong said Asean foreign ministers would talk to their Myanmar counterpart about Aung San Suu Kyi in a meeting scheduled for July in Manila, although it would not be the main item on the agenda.

Rejoinder

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In a rejoinder the group claimed that Anis Ahmed, managing director of MGH group, never kept any money belonging to Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary-general of BNP.

Therefore, there cannot be any question of Tarique Rahman's money as part of a deal, it claimed.

OUR REPLY

In the report, we mentioned that Anis Ahmed Gorky of MGH Group deposited Tk 23.80 crore on April 23 as part of a deal to return the money he kept from Khaleda's son Tarique Rahman. MGH group did not deny the fact of depositing the money and also did not clarify the reason for depositing the money.

Khaleda, Hasina

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governments," Communications Adviser and Chairman of the National Committee on Serious Crimes and Corruption Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

Replying to a question, he said the allegations against the chiefs of the two parties are being scrutinised by his committee. "We'll carefully look into the allegations based on information (provided by the detained leaders during quizzing by the Task Force for Interrogation)."

Justice Fazlul Haque

FROM PAGE 1

law and land adviser.

When contacted, Fazlul Haque has rejected the allegations outright terming those imaginary, motivated, cooked up and baseless.

According to sources, the CCF and some Bashundhara Group officials told interrogators that the former adviser had taken Tk 1.25 crore in bribe from two forest officials and a private company. The two officials gave him Tk 80 lakh – one to get transferred to his preferred place and the other to stall his transfer from a place of his choice.

Bashundhara Group gave him Tk 45 lakh to get 84 acres of khas land allotted to it in exchange for some scattered lands of the group.

The then forest secretary Haider Ali, administrative officer of land ministry Kutub Uddin, and Fazlul Haque's son-in-law Prince allegedly mediated the bribery.

Shamsul Azam, assistant chief conservator of forests, education and training branch, Dhaka, gave Tk 30 lakh to the adviser to stall his transfer to Dhaka from Chittagong in October last year. He was then working as District Forest Officer (DFO) in Chittagong.

The money was handed over through Haider to the adviser at his Mintoo Road official residence in November last year. Haider Ali took Tk 10 lakh for the mediation. The present caretaker government made Haider officer on special duty (OSD). Atikul Azam, DFO in Noakhali, gave the adviser Tk 50 lakh to get transferred to Chittagong circle. Prince allegedly mediated the bribery. Atikul was transferred to Chittagong circle from Noakhali as conservator of forest in January this year.

BASHUNDHARA GROUP

Sources said East West Property Development of Bashundhara Group had applied to the land ministry to get 84 acres of khas land under Keraniganj mouja allotted to Bashundhara Riverview Project in exchange for some of their scattered land.

As Bashundhara authorities lobbied with officials of the land ministry for the allotment, Kutub Uddin met the adviser with the proposal that owner of Bashundhara Group Ahmed Akbar Sobhan is eager to provide Tk 1 crore for this.

Following the adviser's consent, the settled amount was paid through a cheque by manager of East West Property Development Liakat Hossain. Kutub deposited the money in the account of his younger brother Lokman Mahmud.

Tk 45 lakh in 90 bundles of Tk 500 note was drawn from the account several days later and kept in the almrah of Kutub's office at the land ministry. Later, he took the money to the adviser's residence.

Law enforcers have confirmed the allegations after questioning some officials of Bashundhara Group and an official of land ministry and examining several bank accounts, the sources added.

FAZLUL HAQUE' VERSION

Fazlul Haque said that as CCF, he (Gani) could have discussed with him issues concerning forest department.

But how could he know so much in detail about an incident in land ministry. "I swear I do not know even a single person of Bashundhara." Haque went on. "The forest official might have made the allegation either to save himself or to take revenge on me."

Explaining the reason for taking revenge, the former adviser said while in office, he had once called the CCF to his office and rebuked him over cutting of trees and encroaching on forestland in Kaliaokir. He had also warned him (CCF) that he would inform the president about the matter and remove him, if necessary.

In reply to a question, he said, "Prince is my only son-in-law and he lives in London. He is implicated in the incident but he does not know anybody involved in it."

He added, "I came to know about the allegations through newspaper reports. I suspect those whoever gave the information to newspapers."

Grisly deaths

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seconds, a large chunk of earth of the hill came down with an enormous weight to bury alive the mother and her two children. It was too late when rescuers from fire brigade, volunteers from Action Aid and some locals rushed to the spot.

With incessant rain still beating down on the rescue workers' heads, they were engulfed in a heartbreaking scene as they retrieved body after body from under the muddy debris.

The father, who was not present at the time, came to know of the tragedy hours after it had happened, at 12:30pm.

Tragedy also struck the family of Mohammad Shahjahan, a small trader at city's Hamzarbag area under Panchlaish thana.

Since early morning, the rain made Shahjahan's entire family marooned inside the house.

The unthinkable happened at around 10:30am. As the water was rising sharply, Shahjahan's sister made an attempt to take his 4-year-old son Mohammad Rafiq out to safety.

As soon as she came out of the house, a strong surge of water detached her from Rafiq and swept him away.

Rafiq was a class VII student at Hamzarbag Rahmania High School.

Rescuers and locals searched the entire area, but could not find Rafiq till writing of this story at around 5:00 pm.

Fire brigade office at Agrabad received another distress call at around 1:30pm about a minor boy slipping into a canal at Sholakbar in Panchlaish thana. A team of fire fighters made it to the scene in no time, but found none till writing of this report.