

Ex-estate minister Aman

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prepare an appeal to be filed with the High Court against the judgment," he said.

Amran and Sabera were both present in the court when the judge pronounced the verdict. Aman was standing in the dock while Sabera was sitting in a wheel chair in front of the dock since she was ill. Earlier, the police brought the two to the court.

Judge Firoz started reading out the verdict at 2:30pm after examining the investigation report, depositions of 23 witnesses and statements of the two accused, and arguments of the prosecution and the defence. The verdict took around half an hour to complete.

On February 18, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) asked 50 corruption suspects, including Aman, to submit their wealth statements. Aman, who had been detained on February 4 by the joint forces, submitted his wealth statement through representatives.

On March 6, ACC Deputy Director Abdullah Al Zahid filed the graft case with Kafrul Police Station alleging that there is a wide discrepancy between the incomes and expenditures of the former BNP lawmaker from Keraniganj.

Aman acquired properties, including houses and vehicles, valued over Tk 8.28 crore and he made the huge wealth through misuse of power and bribery, it said.

The ACC deputy director also accused Sabera of providing false information in her statement submitted to the ACC.

On April 29, ACC deputy directors Abdullah Al Zahid and Jibon Krishna Roy, investigation officers of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka.

In the charge sheet, they said Aman and Sabera acquired properties, including house and vehicles, valued over Tk 10 crore. The value was shown Tk 8.28 crore in the FIR. The charge sheet accused Aman of abusing power and taking bribes and Sabera of giving false

information in her statement.

The CMM court sent the case to the Special Court on May 6 for quick disposal.

The Special Court framed charges against Aman and Sabera on May 16. Earlier on May 10, the court ordered to send Sabera in jail when she appeared before the court in a hearing of the case.

After deposition of statements by Aman and Sabera on June 7 the court had fixed yesterday for delivering the judgment.

Prosecution lawyers including Mahbub Ahmed and Mir Ahmed Ali Salam were present to receive the judgment.

Expressing satisfaction over the verdict, the prosecution lawyers told the media that Aman has been convicted for three years' imprisonment under section 26(2) of the ACC Act that says if any person submits any written statement or provides any information that is false or baseless, then that person will be sentenced to a prison term of up to three years or a fine or both.

Aman has been sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment under section 27 of the ACC Act according to which a person would be convicted if he or she is found to have acquired wealth through dishonest means.

Sabera has been convicted under section 109 of the Penal Code for abetting her husband in committing the offences.

The conviction will be effective with the pronouncement of the verdict.

An ACC official said Aman's total wealth is valued over Tk 9.94 crore while according to his wealth statement submitted to the ACC his legal wealth is worth Tk 1.28 crore. Aman's wealth to be confiscated includes four houses in Gulshan, Banani and Keraniganj, 36 flats in the capital, 80 bighas of land in Savar and plots worth 660 decimals of land at other places.

Shops of food

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theatres, petrol pumps and motor-cars servicing centres and salons will also remain out of the restriction.

The clarification was issued to dispel the confusion that has been created in public mind about the categories of shops that would remain closed after 7:00pm under the rational use of electricity

of power.

It said the attention of the government has been drawn to news, special reports, articles, editorials and letters published in a section of the print media that small traders are incurring losses or being harassed in the wake of confusion prevailing in public mind about the categories of shops that have been brought under the restriction.

With the issuance of this clarification, the government expressed the hope that the confusion about the shops that will remain open after 7:00pm in the evening will be removed.

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Red tape shoos

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Dhaka. Notably, there are 161 refuelling stations in the country.

Sources in the RPGCL said at least 55,000 CNG-run vehicles run in the capital, which refuel at the 91 stations. On an average, there is one refuelling station for over 600 vehicles.

Other sources said the actual number of CNG-run vehicles running in the capital varies from 1 lakh to 1.14 lakh. These vehicles have to queue up to get fuel.

But the situation worsens in the wake of frequent power disruption in the capital.

They said once the RPGCL approves a plan, it requires approval of the Department of Explosives. There are numerous instances the Department did not consider the RPGCL-approved plans and suggested further modifications, they said.

Similarly, the RPGCL also asked the entrepreneurs to modify layout plans approved by the department, the sources added. The cycle continued when the department reiterated by bringing changes to the plans before final approval.

The department finally okays a plan in two phases -- first they inspect the spot before installation and then gives permission after the installation is completed.

The department officials admitted that differences of opinions between the RPGCL and their office are rife.

Executive Director of CNG Association of Bangladesh Nurul Alam cited two such instances -- one in Chittagong and the other in Sylhet -- where this conflict hampered launch of two stations.

A number of entrepreneurs said the government encourages CNG-run vehicles mainly on environmental grounds. The requirement of an extra approval from the Department of Environment is then totally unnecessary, they argued.

The RPGCL does not have any plan to expand its businesses and unlike other business enterprises it provides most of service free of cost, even the forms and constancy are free," he claimed.

If someone wants to upgrade

from petrol pumps to CNG stations, why should they obtain 'no objection certificates' from the Deputy Commissioner's Office, they asked.

Like the DC office, at least eight more agencies including the Fire Service and Civil Defence, Rajuk or municipality, R&H, metropolitan police seek similar documents.

Though the DC office gives clearance to use the land further approval is needed from the R&H and Dhaka Metropolitan Police, they added.

A prospective entrepreneur also needs R&H approval for the strip of land that is needed for drive-in and drive-out of the CNG station. Even in case of upgrading existing fuel stations, which already use the strip of land, the approval is needed once again.

The entrepreneurs expressed their dissatisfaction saying if no

permission is required for other private construction, there is no reason it should be applicable only for CNG refuelling stations.

A communications ministry review committee with representatives from the departments concerned was supposed to settle the problems regarding establishment of CNG refuelling stations.

But the committee failed to bring any positive change as the members did not have the authority to approve anything on behalf of their departments.

The RPGCL does not have any statistics regarding how many vehicles are being converted every day across the country. But industry insiders said owners are increasingly converting their vehicle due to repeated price hike of petrol and diesel.

They also said around 150 vehicles on an average are being converted every day. If the trend continues there would be tremendous pressure on the existing CNG stations and a severe CNG crisis is likely in a few months.

Some of the entrepreneurs also expressed their dissatisfaction over the RPGCL's dual role. It runs CNG conversion workshop and refuelling stations while being a regulator in the sector at the same time. A competitor in the market cannot assume the role of a regulator, they noted.

Contacted, RPGCL Managing Director Abdul Wadud said: "We don't compete in the market; we have only a CNG conversion unit and a filling station, which are used mainly on training purpose."

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73 NAM flats

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buildings located in the city's Manik Mia Avenue and Nakhalpara. Of them, 324 flats were allocated to the lawmakers of the eighth parliament and the rest were allotted to the members and officials of the Special Security Force and the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The flats are equipped with air-conditioner, television, refrigerator, computer, table, chair and other necessary furniture.

At present, the flats of 34 former lawmakers and ministers are lying vacant, as they are facing trial. Some other flats, belonging to the former lawmakers now on the run, are also unoccupied.

Although the flats had been used by the MPs themselves or by their relatives, no representative of the MPs or their relatives handed over the charges of the flats to Parliament Secretariat.

Since there is no parliament at the moment and no possibility of holding elections soon, the government is thinking about renting out the vacant flats to the government officials for their temporary accommodation.

Dhaka, Delhi

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Dhaka in 2003 and in New Delhi in 2005.

Following the talks, a MoU between Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institutions (BSTI) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), is expected to be signed which was recently approved by the council of advisers.

According to the MoU provisions, BSTI and BIS would standardise quality controls to allow the BSTI to perform tests and certify Bangladeshi goods for export to India.

These are the first steps to remove non-tariff barriers, long demanded by Bangladesh to expand its market in India, and especially stressed by Ittekhbar during informal bilateral talks in April.

The MoU would end practices such as the system of testing Bangladeshi export goods by the BIS, not the BSTI.

Bangladesh has also demanded the removal of para-tariff barriers, which raises the price of Bangladeshi exports in India due to Indian customs surcharges, additional charges, internal taxes and levies levied on imports, and decreed customs valuation.

The secretary-level talks, including Menon's call on foreign adviser Ittekhbar, are expected to re-energise deals on joint-border patrolling and border demarcation issues between Dhaka and New Delhi.

The official talks are also expected to bring up the two multi-billion dollar investment proposals from two Indian business giants, Mittal and Tata.

High-level government sources, however, say the government does not plan on taking decisions on the Tata and Mittal investment plans, but wants an elected government to take the decision.

Acting Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain will lead the Bangladeshi delegation at the official talks, to be held at the State Guest House Padma.

Some very sensitive institutions like National Defence Council (NDC) and Army Staff College are located in the area. Besides, the occupants are also creating disturbances in establishing a direct road between Mirpur and Ashulia through the area, the statement added.

Progress was stalled by the financial dispute between Pyongyang and Washington involving \$25 million in alleged North Korean illicit funds. That dispute was resolved in recent days, and although North Korea still hasn't shut the reactor, it invited U.N. monitors next week to discuss a shutdown.

Last year, North Korea openly invited Hill to visit the country, but Washington did not accept the offer.

"I think the US is trying to keep North Korea from dragging its feet any longer" now that the banking dispute is resolved, said Nam Sung-wook, a North Korea expert at Korea University. "Unless something is done right now, North Korea could stall for time on another pretext."

Memorial opens

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"For 36 years I could address my father as 'Abba'. The Pakistani Army stopped my calling him 'Abba' again... they made my mother mentally ill. We knew the hard way how the absence of one person plunges a family into helplessness," Abul Ahsan said in his reaction to The Daily Star.

It is not only Abul Ahsan, lakhs of people of the country lost their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters, but the farce is the killers - the Pakistani Army and their local collaborators - wanted to obliterate the traces of genocide.

"No, this cannot go unpunished. Pakistan's propaganda denying the genocide of 1971 cannot go on," said Akku Chowdhury, the trustee of Liberation War Museum, during his welcome speech.

He said the excavation of the killing field and its preservation will make the golden days as well as the days of bloodshed memorable forever inspiring the next generation to call for putting the war criminals on trial.

After eight years of the excavation, the Liberation War Museum has built a triangular memorial at the torture chamber and at the mass grave keeping the structure of the pump house intact. Museum Trustee and Architect Rabu Hossain designed the memorial based on the concept provided by another Trustee Mofidul Hoque while artists Rofiqunnabi and Muniruzzaman adorned it with a mural.

Dr MA Hasan, who conducted the forensic tests of the skulls and bones recovered, said most of the skulls were severed from the body with sharp weapons and some bore marks of being striking heavy weapons.

Hasan, also the director of War Crimes Fact Finding Committee, said Mirpur in Dhaka is the place where many more killing fields could be found.

Hill and Ri were shown walking together and chatting in a friendly manner.

"We're all waiting for you," Ri said. In response, Hill said he "got the message on Monday and we had to work fast to find an airplane," suggesting the visit was hastily arranged and based on a North Korean invitation.

North Korea, which carried out its first nuclear test explosion in October, promised in a landmark agreement struck in February with China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the U.S. that it would shut down its bomb-making nuclear reactor at Yongbyon by mid-April.

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Abbas strongly defended his decision to dismiss the Hamas-led national unity government last week and swear in the emergency cabinet that Hamas has dismissed as an illegitimate lackey of Israel and the United States.

"Our main objective is to prevent the chaos from spreading to the West Bank," he said, adding that the new government of technocrats led by US-educated prime minister Salam Fayyad was the "clear answer to the coup."

Israeli Foreign Tzipi Livni telephoned Fayyad on Wednesday to open dialogue with his government after the 15-month hiatus while Hamas were in power.