

11 tax-dodging cases

27 years in politics

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the order to appear before the court.

The court had issued the arrest warrant after Syed Zakir Hossain, deputy tax commissioner of Companies Circle of NBR, filed the case on July 12.

In the order, the judge said the arrest warrant was issued against Farzana as the charges brought against her under sections 165/166 of the Income Tax Ordinance 1984 were preliminarily found to be true.

In his complaint, Zakir said Farzana had evaded Tk 80.45 lakh in income tax during fiscal years 2004-2007.

Farzana, managing director of Garden Fresh Preservations Ltd in Savar, gave false information to the income tax department about her income and expenditure and did not show her income tax returns. She also concealed information about her real income of Tk 2.91 crore, the complainant added.

CASE AGAINST FALU'S WIFE
The same court directed the authorities concerned to publish advertisements in two national Bangla dailies asking Mahbuba Sultana, wife of detained former BNP lawmaker Mosaddak Ali Falu, to appear before the court within three days, in connection with a tax evasion case filed by the NBR.

The court had passed the order as she failed to comply with its order.

Earlier, on July 5 the same court issued an arrest warrant against Falu's wife after Mohammad Masudur Rahman Masud, deputy tax commissioner of Tax Circle of

the NBR, filed the case.

In his complaint, Masud said Mahbuba evaded Tk 1.58 crore income tax from 2001 to 2006.

Mahbuba repeatedly gave false information to the income tax department about her real income and expenditure and did not show her income tax returns, the complainant added.

She also did not submit statement about her salary received from ntv, even though she had withdrawn Tk 9,60,000 from the satellite TV channel.

After a long investigation, the Central Intelligence Cell found out about her taking salary from ntv, Masud added.

ABBAS CASE
Motijheel police submitted the charge sheet against Mirza Abbas to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, showing 14 people as prosecution witnesses.

The case was filed against him under the Special Powers Act, Money Laundering Act and Excise Act on February 24.

The joint forces seized a huge sum in local and foreign currencies and other items from Mirza Abbas' South Shahjahanpur residence in the capital on February 4.

The items seized include sales slips for gold ornaments worth Tk 40 lakh, 4,600 US dollars, 17,000 bahts, 418 Singapore dollars, 432 Malaysian ringgits, several mobile phone sets and five passports.

Complainant of the case Sub-Inspector Rafiqul Islam alleged that Abbas had kept those in his possession evading a huge amount of taxes.

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rights for the people," Hasina told a Dhaka court in her submission following her arrest.

Soon after the formation of the current caretaker government, Hasina lauded its anti-corruption drive, but the government's restriction on her returning home from abroad following filing of an extortion case against her, extremely annoyed her and she started criticising the government's initiatives.

Later the government imposed a restriction on her again by barring her from going to visit her expecting daughter in the USA and virtually kept her confined to her Sudha Sadan residence following filing of another extortion case against her.

At the same time the government was creating pressure on Hasina to retire from politics, while she was also facing tremendous pressure within the party from some senior leaders who had started criticising her 'autocratic' leadership, proposing to bring reforms to the party.

On the other hand, some other senior leaders of the party including the AL general secretary, known as loyal to Hasina, had already been detained making Hasina more isolated.

Amid such a situation Hasina recently blasted the military intelligence accusing it of administering torture on detained political leaders, and plotting to break up established political parties.

Referring to the military takeover of 1975 and the High Court judgment declaring the takeover as illegal, the AL president yesterday said, "To satisfy political ambitions of individuals, similar tactics are being adopted again at the expense of public sufferings."

Hasina, who had been elected the president of AL in absentia in 1980 in

a bid to unite the party, returned home and took charge of the party in 1981.

"If a person is afraid of death, life has no dignity," Hasina told Newsweek on May 11, 1981 when she was elected the president of AL while in exile.

She also said she was neither afraid of being killed nor deterred by the strength of the government she would face.

Returning home, Hasina proved her resolve by strengthening a movement against the erstwhile military ruler, which at its zenith forced the autocratic ruler to step down paving the way for restoration of democracy in 1990.

She successfully made AL united under her leadership and took the party to power in 1996 after 21 years of being the opposition since 1975.

Hasina and her younger sister Rehana escaped a bloody coup on August 15, 1975, which assassinated her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of her family members, as they were abroad at the time. But the military backed rulers, who usurped the state power following the first bloody coup of the country, forced them to remain in exile by imposing restrictions on their return home till 1981.

Hasina survived over a dozen assassination attempts with the latest and the most dreaded one being the grenade attack on an AL rally on August 21, 2004 on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital while she was addressing it protesting the rise of Islamist militancy under the patronisation of the then four-party alliance government led by BNP.

Several dedicated party leaders and activists managed to save their leader by forming a human shield, but the attack left 22 AL leaders and activists killed and over two hundred injured including many maimed. Hasina herself suffered an ear injury in the attack.

Several other attempts were also made to assassinate her in the last two decades while she was leading street agitations. Hasina recently told The Daily Star that a conspiracy was afoot to eliminate her politically after failing to eliminate her physically.

HASINA IN DETENTION
Within 10 months of her return home in 1981, the then army chief, HM Ershad, usurped the state power through a military coup and declared martial law. Hasina led her party to forming a 15-party coalition and to joining a strong movement against the military rule.

In February 1983, military intelligence picked her up and took her to Dhaka Cantonment blindfolded and kept her confined for 15 days. After that she was kept confined to her residence on several occasions.

In February and November in 1984, Hasina was put under house arrests twice. She was again confined to her residence for three months from March 1985.

In 1987, when she was leading a siege to the Bangladesh Secretariat sitting inside her sports utility vehicle, the police attempted to tow away her automobile with her being in it, but the attempt was foiled in the face of severe resistance from fellow demonstrators.

In October 1986, Hasina addressed a huge public rally in Bogra ignoring restrictions imposed against holding such rallies under the martial law. On her way to Rajshahi from Bogra, she was arrested again and forced to return to Dhaka.

On November 27, 1990 Hasina was again put under house arrest after the declaration of a state of emergency by the autocratic Ershad government, but the government was forced to release her in the face of a mounting mass movement.

Hasina was briefly put under house arrest in Bangabandhu's Dhanmaondi residence along with her family members by the Pakistani army also, during the nine-month liberation war which ended with Bangladesh's independence in December 1971.

Govt firm

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Mainul at a press briefing at the law ministry said, "The caretaker government is committed to establishing honest politics. Since cases filed in connection with minor corruption are being tried, why people with allegations of major corruption be left out?"

However, Mainul kept mum when asked why the big fish of Jamaat with extortion charges remain at large.

Mainul said Hasina was arrested with a view to framing the charge sheet as soon as possible in the extortion case. He said Hasina is accused in 13 other cases but she was arrested in the extortion case.

On the government's position, he said the government has done nothing due to hostility towards any person and emphatically said anyone accused of corruption would be tried.

Mainul told the reporters that Hasina was arrested following an investigation and the investigation work is almost finished.

"The policy of the government is not to arrest anybody, especially the female leaders, before investigation and in this case the investigation work is almost complete," Mainul said.

He said according to the law, prior to submitting the charge sheet one has to be shown arrested or absconding and since it was not possible to show Hasina absconding, she was arrested.

Azam J Chowdhury, managing director East Coast Trading Ltd, filed the extortion case against Hasina with Gulshan Police Station.

Maniul said plaintiff Azam said Hasina and her cousin Sheikh Selim extorted Tk 2.9962 crore threatening to stop the 210 megawatt Shiddhirganj Power Plant. The money was allegedly given to them in eight cheques.

Replying to a question whether the government was trying to make room for the reformists in the AL or trying to alienate Hasina from politics, Mainul said, "The political leaders can say whatever they like, but this government has no political aspiration. All are equal before law."

He said the case was brought under Emergency Power Rules 2007 and she will be released if the allegation brought against her is not proved. The government would not intervene in the judicial process.

When asked if BNP chief Khaleda Zia would be arrested, Mainul said it would not be wise to speculate. Anybody accused of corruption would be tried, he added.

UNB reports: Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said he thinks the arrest of top leaders of political parties would not cause any adverse impact on the country's economy as the economic indicators are working well.