

Tarique granted HC bail

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to explain why detention order against him should not be declared illegal.

A Dhaka court, meantime, set December 6 to pass judgment on a seven-day remand prayer for Tarique in another case.

TARIQUE'S BAIL.

The division bench of Justice Shah Abu Nayem, Muminur Rahman and Justice Zubayer Rahman

Chowdhury granted the ad interim bail to Tarique, reports UNB.

The court also issued a ruling upon the government to explain in a week why placing the two extortions cases under the Emergency Power Rules should not be declared illegal.

Despite the bail, Tarique is unlikely to walk out of prison as he is accused in a string of other corruption cases along with the detention order, said Mahbubuddin Khan, a counsel for Tarique.

The two cases were filed with Shahbagh and Dhanmondi police stations in April.

TARIQUE-HANNAN SHAH.

Another division bench of Justice Nazmunn Ara Sultana and Justice M Abu Tariq yesterday ruled on the government to explain why detention orders against Tarique and Brig Gen (retd) ASHAN Hannan Shah, adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, should not be declared illegal, reports UNB.

The court orders followed separate petitions by Tarique and Hannan challenging the validity of detentions against them under the Special Powers Act.

The government put Tarique in detention under Special Powers Act following his arrest on March 7. Hannan Shah was served with a 30-day detention order on November 25 after his arrest.

Earlier on November 22, Hannan secured ad interim bail from the High Court. He is accused of violating the Emergency Power Rules and assaulting a top party dissident, Lt Gen (Retd) Mahbubur Rahman, on November 7.

TARIQUE'S REMAND.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabban fixed December 6 to give decision on remand prayer for Tarique in connection with concealing information in his wealth statement to the Anti-Corruption Commission, reports our court correspondent.

The investigation officer in

forwarding report explained to the court why Tarique should be remanded after the BNP leader was turned in before the court under tight security at 11:05am.

The IO wrote that Tarique needs to be questioned to discover the sources of his Tk 55 lakh bank deposits with Banani branches of Prime Bank and Dhaka Bank, plots at Basundhara and in Gazipur and other relevant matters.

Defence lawyers, on the other hand, submitted a petition for cancellation of the remand prayer arguing that their client was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him. They said the reason for the remand prayer was baseless.

The court then asked the defence lawyers, after long hearing on the issue, to submit an affidavit stating that the charges brought against their client are false, fabricated and concocted, which the defence followed.

At one stage, the court told Tarique's lawyers that the investigation officer should be given the opportunity to probe the matter independently this time as the past government had made the Anti-Corruption Commission a dysfunctional entity which is why no probe reports were submitted for years.

Two other accused in this case are Tarique's wife Dr Zubaida Rahman and mother-in-law Iqlambar Banu.

ACC Deputy Director Zahid Huda filed the case with Kiflul Police Station on September 26, accusing Tarique of concealing information on assets worth over Tk 4.23 crore in his June 10 wealth statement to the anti-corruption watchdog and amassing an estimated Tk 4.82 crore wealth illegally.

The BNP leader handed in his statement through the jail authorities, showing that he, his wife and daughter own Tk 1.37 crore in assets.

He was earlier remanded for 10 days in four extortions cases -- he is accused in seven such cases -- filed with Shahbagh, Gulshan and Kafra police stations on different dates.

The joint forces arrested him on March 7 at his mother's cantonment residence and he has since been detained in Dhaka Central Jail.

The investigation officer in

Ballot box

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Party of Bangladesh, and Workers Party demanded introduction of transparent ballot boxes. And, BDB also suggested the same during its talk with the commission yesterday.

About polling agents, the CEC said the commission will study the culture of having a large number of polling agents in polling stations, in bid to curb poll expenditure.

"We have to think deeply, how to keep the polling booths uncluttered and how to avoid the presence of a huge number of polling agents there. The polling agents work to check the authenticity of a voter. But this time the voter list will have photographs of voters, reducing considerably the possibility of fake votes being cast," the CEC argued.

The BDB delegation led by its Secretary General Maj (retd) Abdul Mannan argued for reducing the number of polling agents for curbing poll expenditure. BDB leaders also said a large amount of money is spent only for hiring the polling agents.

The CEC lauded the BDB proposal and assured them of necessary steps addressing the issue.

The existing electoral laws say a contesting candidate or his/her election agent, may, before the commencement of the poll, appoint for each polling station not more than two polling agents if there is only one booth, and not more than five polling agents if there are more than one booths, and the contestant shall give notice thereof in writing to the presiding officer in advance.

During the electoral reform talk in the EC Secretariat's conference room, BDB placed a set of proposals including one for allocating election symbols for individual candidates, cancelling the existing system of allocating one symbol for all nominated candidates of a political party. It also proposed allocation of Tk 5 per voter as election expenditure, and barring anti-liberation political parties and similar religious obscurantist forces from getting registration from the EC.

During the talk with BDB, the two other election commissioners, Muhammed Sohul Hussain and Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hussain, explained various electoral reform proposals drafted by the EC.

The committee last week also

Mine character

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Bangladesh will need 450 million tonnes of coal.

The draft says that the country's existing four discovered coalfields of Barapukuria, Phulbari, Khalashipur and Dighipara can meet this need until 2030 or thereabout.

The country's lone coalmine is the Barapukuria underground mine, which is now producing around half a million tonnes of coal a year. The troubled mine may be able to produce up to one million tonnes a year in a best-case scenario.

The committee was formed in June as the sixth draft version of a national coal policy drew a lot of criticism for being anti-investment and self-contradictory. It held its first meeting one month after its formation.

The 10-member committee that held dialogues with various stakeholders and opinion leaders stressed the need to have a national coal body like "Coal Bangla" that would lead coal ventures in the country.

According to Lye's written statement, Asia Energy says that it already sees a market of 12 million tonnes of coal a year. The Asia Energy had proposed to set up a 1,000MW power plant, which would demand three million tonnes of coal a year. Plus, the country's brick kilns demand around three million tonnes. Brickette (packed coal used for cooking and domestic use) industry can cater for household demands of another three million tonnes.

From this 12-million-tonne market, an investor friendly environment would encourage more power plants, which can consume the remaining coal of Phulbari's production, Lye said.

He, however, added that about 25 percent of the coal of Phulbari was high quality coking coal, which is used in steel industry and has very high price in the international market. Until Bangladesh has its steel industry, this coal should be exported instead of using it in brick kilns, he said.

In this regard, the committee assigned one of its members to gather data on global royalty rate trend. The data tabled last week showed that worldwide seven percent is the highest royalty rate. Any rate beyond that can make the coal production price too costly.

The committee also argued that increasing the royalty would be also applicable for the government-owned Barapukuria coalmine, which is unable to properly pay its five percent royalty. Earlier, the committee made a visit to that coalmine.

The committee last week also

invited Asia Energy chief Gary Lye to hear his opinions on several issues, including exports, which is one of the main focuses of Asia Energy's Phulbari coalmine development scheme. The controversial company proposed to produce 15 million tonnes of coal a year from an open-pit mine in Phulbari that has 572 million tonnes of coal.

Lye told the committee that the company was interested in a market that would secure the return of its investment. Asia Energy would not be interested to export, if the local market can absorb the production.

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The committee last week also

Drugs

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heroin around the den. Dealers from across the city also come to the spot to buy the deadly drug.

SYNDICATE BOSS.

The gang's godfather is a couple popularly known as 'drug lady' Rony Begum and her husband Abu Hossain Liton.

According to DNC sources, the couple has been hiding in India for the last six months but their close relatives and aides are looking after the trade.

The sources also say the couple owns several pieces of land and flats in and around the capital. They have a two-and-a-half-bigha plot in Gazipur and land property in Dakkhinkhan, Khilkhet, Ambaria, Bardeshi in Savar.

Heroin and phenylidyle are mostly smuggled into the country from India, DNC officials say.

Members of the gang often bring consignments of heroin from India and sometimes collect the drug from smugglers in different bordering villages.

Usually, most of the smuggled heroin and phenylidyle comes from Benapole in Jessor, the DNC officials add.

Assistant Commissioner (Dhaka zone of the DNC) Fazlur Rahman, however, denied the allegation that DNC officials take bribe from the drug traders.

He said if the allegations against any DNC officials and staff were proved, strict action would be taken against them.

"If a salesman is arrested, within hours the gang finds his replacement. As the salesmen are also addicts, it does not take even an hour to appoint a new salesman if anyone is offered Tk 100 to Tk 150 per day," he noted.

Being deprived of their rights, indigenous groups initiated violent activities, he added.

The law adviser said it is a demand of justice to remove discrimination, mistrust and conflicts created by the peace accord.

Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Naim Ahmed told The Daily Star there is no scope of taking bribe at the institutional level.

He said they will enquire whether anyone takes bribe from the drug peddlers personally.

"If anyone does so, tough action will be taken against them," he also said.

Chaired by Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, the discussion was addressed, among others, by Khagrachari Hill District Council Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura, Monthly Madina editor Mohiuddin Khan, member secretary of Samo Odhikar Mostafizur Rahman Millat, and Advocate Tazul Islam.

Journalist Hasan Mahmud Prafulla read out the keynote paper on the issue titled 'A Decade of CHT Accord: Expectation and Achievement'.

Other speakers also termed the peace agreement unconstitutional as well as against the interests of the Bangladeshi settlers and demanded a review of it.

Prof Emajuddin Ahmed said the accord includes several articles that are anti-constitutional and which don't maintain the interests of the Bangladeshi.

He came up with a suggestion, saying, "The government could form a committee to review it and find out reasons why the settlers are being deprived of their rights."

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