

Tarique, Babar

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cognisance and beginning the trial.

Of those accused, Tarique, also the senior joint secretary general of BNP, Babar and Sufian are behind bars while the others are still at large.

Though detained on other charges, the three were later shown arrested in the case.

The IO said the accused should be brought to trial as the charges against them have been proved primarily. He appealed the court to issue warrants for the arrest of those on the run and order attachment of their properties.

On October 4 last year, ACC Deputy Assistant Director Abul Kashem filed the bribery case with Ramna Police Station, accusing six including Babar.

Tarique and Saleemul were named as the other two defendants after investigation found their involvement.

The ACC approved the charge sheet on April 23. The charges were made under sections 161, 165 and 165(kha) of the penal code and 5(2) of Prevention of Corruption Act 1947.

Out of the Tk 21 crore bribe given by Shah Alam, Tarique had received Tk 1 crore in cash, according to case details.

Babar was paid Tk 6 crore in cash and Tk 14 crore in cheques and pay orders. He had deposited the money in an account with the Prime Bank.

Saleemul Huq, who was the chairman of the bank at that time, was charged with keeping the ill-gotten money in his account and drawing Tk 88 lakh as interest against him.

Babar received the amount at different times between August 7 and September 13, 2006.

Abu Sufian arranged meetings between Babar, Tarique and Shah Alam at Babar's official residence on Bailey Road on August 7 and 8.

At first, Babar had demanded Tk 100 crore to spare the Bashundhara Group chairman's son from facing murder charges. But after negotiations, the amount was fixed at Tk 50 crore.

Duke of Gloucester

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yesterday that the visit by Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester will focus on the UK's continuing and wide-ranging commitments to long-term development in Bangladesh.

This included particular contributions to disaster management and relief and reconstruction projects in southern Bangladesh following the devastating 2007 floods and Cyclone Sidr.

During the visit, Prince Richard will also call on the President Prof Dr Iajuddin Ahmed.

"We are absolutely delighted to welcome His Royal Highness. His visit demonstrates the importance of the UK attaches to people-to-people links with Bangladesh, these links are the bedrock of friendship between our countries," said British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury in a statement ahead of the visit.

The royal visit, coming shortly after trips by three cabinet ministers in just four months, further underlines the strong bilateral relationship between UK and Bangladesh.

Prince Richard, the Duke of Gloucester, is the second son of the late Duke of Gloucester and the late Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester. He is a grandson of George V and a first cousin to the Queen.

Bibiyana power

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Since the government decided to push forward some large power projects last year, IFC of the World Bank put pressure on the government to prioritise Bibiyana power project over all other projects, prompting the government to do so.

The government move surprised all power sector players, since Bibiyana power project had no allocated land or power infrastructure to begin with, while Sirajganj and Meghnaghat-3 power projects had the primary infrastructures ready.

Bibiyana gas field was discovered in 1998 by a US company, Unocal, which was later acquired by Chevron. Since the discovery, Unocal was pushing for exporting Bibiyana's gas, saying there was not enough market for gas in Bangladesh.

However, as a gas crisis in the country started to emerge, Chevron developed the field from 2004, and from last year started supplying about 240 million cubic feet of gas a day (mmcf/d), while its supplying capacity is more than 500mmcf/d.

Slack of gas supply pipeline would not allow Chevron to supply in its full capacity until 2010, making it so eager to have Bibiyana power project that the company itself participated in the bid.

Chevron is known for participating in power tenders very selectively, and this is its first such bidding in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile the Power Cell upheld its decision to exclude Summit Industrial and Mercantile Corporation from biddings for Bibiyana and Sirajganj power projects, responding to an appeal from the company for reconsidering its inclusion.

Summit felt that it had been unjustly pushed out of the competition by an arbitrary evaluation by IFC. IFC calculated the net value of Summit at only 35 million US dollars, while the auditor's report submitted to the Power Cell put the figure at 120 million dollars. The auditor SF Ahmed & Cowan nominated by the Power Cell.

However on April 27, the Power Cell upheld IFC's evaluation by presenting a certificate by Acnabin, a chartered accounting firm, stating that Summit's net worth is 32.75 million dollars, although Acnabin was not on the list of auditors of the Power Cell for the bid.

A few days later, Shah Alam sent Tk 1 crore to Tarique via Apu. Payments of the remaining Tk 20 crore were made through Sufian.

The transaction, however, was stopped with the changeover of government in October, 2006.

Then after the present caretaker government launched the anti-graft drive, Saleemul had tried to get off the hook by surrendering the ticket to the national exchequer.

Tarique was arrested on March 7 last year on extortion charges. Besides yesterday's, formal charges have been laid against him for extortion, amassing assets illegally and concealing wealth information to the ACC.

Babar was arrested on May 29 last year and was later convicted of possessing illegal firearms and ammunition. He was shown arrested also in a case filed for making a fortune through illegal means.

NIKO CASE

The Niko graft case against detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia, former law minister Moudud Ahmed and nine others might be sent today to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court in Dhaka for trial.

Muggers

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"As Giasuddin and another employee Mofazzel Hossain Titu tried to resist, they stabbed Giasuddin in the throat and Mofazzel in a hand," Alauddin told The Daily Star.

He said the other two snatches kept employees Mahmudul Hasan and Sultan Hossain at gunpoint.

Giasuddin and Mofazzel were later rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where they were given treatment.

Witnesses said as the employees raised alarm, pedestrians on the busy road chased them causing one of their motorbikes to fall down. Two muggers on the motorbike exploded a bomb and fired two shots in the air to avert capture.

They fled the scene as one of their gang members appeared on another motorbike and rode away with them.

Angry locals later set fire to the motorbike the muggers left behind.

Alauddin said the spot was less than 50 yards from Lalbagh Police Station but no policeman came forward even after hearing gunshots and the bomb explosion.

Police came to the spot after we had called them over telephone," Alauddin said.

Alauddin filed a case with Lalbagh Police Station in the afternoon accusing six unidentified people of snatching the money.

Advisers

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adding that they are now completing the "final preparations" for the formal dialogue with political parties.

LRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal and Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif attended the meeting.

The overriding aim of the dialogue must be to move towards an acceptable well-participated election inevitable within the stipulated time, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said while talking to The Daily Star last night.

"One of the preconditions for a fruitful dialogue is taking into account the existing political reality. You cannot have a tailor-made good democracy overnight, but a beginning can be had by creating consensus about norms of democratic practices and behaviours," he said.

Ultimately, it is the political leaders who will have to carry out the reforms and they will have to reach consensus among themselves about how to make democracy sustainable, the former adviser said adding that citizens' groups can only play a supporting role through mobilising public opinion.

Even though the government is contemplating inviting an independent rapporteur to the formal dialogue, it may step back considering the parties in the dialogue may feel uneasy as many sensitive issues will come up.

CONSULTATION WITH EXPERTS

The government is considering seeking advice time to time from eminent citizens who are experts in their respective fields like strengthening democracy, holding elections, and constitutional and economic issues.

"Since this caretaker government is an unelected government, it has no other means to assess public opinion or receive their suggestions," a well-placed source told The Daily Star yesterday.

Such consultation will take place as and when necessary, the source added.

OC, SI punished

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Jahan to commit suicide.

SI Nizamuddin of Adabar police told The Daily Star, "The actions were taken against the two in connection with rape and suicide of a garment worker."

Family sources said that after being raped by a gang on April 25, Nur Jahan had to marry one Rajib on insistence of the two policemen.

But later, as Rajib refused to accept her as wife, she took poison and died on April 27.

US coordinator

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US State Department's Coordinator for Counterterrorism to Bangladesh, underscoring the growing importance of cooperation between the two nations in this area.

According to the US embassy officials in Dhaka, during his two-day visit Ambassador Dailey will meet senior government officials on issues related to counterterrorism and US-Bangladesh cooperation on the global war on terror.

They said Bangladesh has become a valuable US ally in the global war on terror. As part of the war effort, the Bangladeshi government has begun to address problems of money laundering and weak border controls to ensure that Bangladesh does not become a terrorist safe-haven.

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CA apprises

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according to the roadmap announced earlier by the Election Commission," said the press secretary.

President Iajuddin gave a patient hearing to the chief adviser and expressed his satisfaction at the government steps towards holding the general election by December this year.

He also expressed satisfaction as the government successfully faced the challenge of food problem and suggested that "the food-grain stock should be increased further".

Both the president and the chief adviser expressed their gratitude to Allah for saving Bangladesh from devastation by cyclone Nargis.

Military Secretary to the President Major General Md Aminul Karim, Secretary of the President's Office Md Sirajul Islam, CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim and President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Howlader were present during the meeting.

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Delwar

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Nam flat in the city.

All the cases against political leaders, including Khaleda Zia, are filed with an ill motive to disqualify them from contesting the elections, but the people will not accept any false and fabricated case, the BNP secretary general said.

No threat would be able to refrain them from performing their duties, Delwar said adding, "Now we are discussing about the programmes that would be announced soon."

"Everything is going on as part of a blueprint, even the January 11 event was totally pre-planned," he said, adding that the judges cannot dismiss their duties properly at present as the laws created in a 'special factory' are being used at will.

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Hasina blames govt's

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the case, yesterday began submissions on his discharge petition.

At one stage of his arguments, Hasina drew the court's attention and said she was not feeling well. In response, Judge Mohammad Firoz Alam ordered the adjournment.

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