

US slaps sanctions on al-Qaeda backers

Assets of 4 Pakistanis frozen

AFP, Washington

The United States imposed sanctions Wednesday on an al-Qaeda backer and three leaders of Pakistan-based Islamist group Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was blamed over last year's Mumbai attacks.

The US Treasury said it was imposing an assets freeze on the four Pakistanis, identified as Fazeel-a-Tul Shaykh Abu Mohammed Ameen al-Peshawari, Arif Qasmani, Mohammed Yahya Mujahid and Nasir Javid.

Peshawari allegedly provided assistance, including funding and recruits, to al-Qaeda and the Taliban militia fighting to regain control of Afghanistan and battling government forces in Pakistan.

Qasmani is said to be the chief coordinator for Lashkar and Mujahid the head of the group's media department while Javid had served as its commander in Pakistan.

Lashkar is widely thought to have been behind last November's 60-hour bloodbath in India's Mumbai city, which led to 166 deaths.

The US Treasury said its action came two days after Peshawari, Qasmani and Mujahid were added to a UN blacklist of individuals and entities linked with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

All UN member states are obliged to freeze the funds and other assets of listed individuals and entities included on the blacklist, and to apply other sanctions, such as travel ban and arms embargo, a Treasury statement said.

Qasmani was also linked in the Treasury statement to the July 2006 train bombing in Mumbai that killed 186 people and the February 2007 Samjhota Express bombing in India's

Panipat city, which killed 68 people.

He allegedly conducted fundraising activities on behalf of Lashkar in 2005 and utilized money that he received from an alleged Indian crime figure and terrorist supporter Dawood Ibrahim to facilitate the July 2006 train bombing.

But the head of one of Pakistan's biggest charities -- widely viewed as a front for LeT -- condemned the sanctions and charged that the men were welfare workers rather than members of the militant group.

"None of the four belonged to Lashkar-e-Taiba. They are welfare workers in Jamaat-ud-Dawa. None of them have a bank account in the USA or any country abroad," the head of the Dawa charity, Hafiz Mohammad Saeed, told AFP.

"The USA has never produced any proof about the involvement of Dawa in terrorism. We are a private NGO working to promote education, medical cover for the poor and need, and rehabilitation in calamity-hit areas," he added.

Pak troops

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the paramilitary Frontier Corps unit, told AFP.

He said the operation was conducted overnight in the Tirah valley of Khyber, one of Pakistan's seven semi-autonomous tribal areas and through which flows the bulk of supplies destined for US-led and Nato troops in Afghanistan.

Death tolls released by Pakistan are impossible to confirm independently because fighting takes place in closed military zones and the army has faced scepticism that more than 1,600 militants have been killed since April.

Lashkar-e-Islam said eight of its members died.

Ashraf

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Pinak might have breached diplomatic norms through his comment.

Ashraf urged main opposition BNP not to divide the nation on the issue and join the House to articulate its view.

"Tipaimukh dam is a national issue. BNP should not try to divide the nation on such issues. If we get divided on national issues, others might take advantage of it," the minister said.

"I urge them to join the parliamentary committee on Tipaimukh dam," Ashraf said.

Replying to a query on the allegation of serving 'poison-mixed' food to Sheikh Hasina during her stay in prison, he said, "A few allegations like this have been brought. Necessary actions could be taken after investigation."

While speaking at the meeting Ashraf alleged that a total of 26,000 AL leaders and workers were killed during the tenure of the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government.

Swachhabek League Dhaka City unit leader Milon was killed during a demonstration demanding cancellation of the January 22 election in 2007.

Swachhabek League President AFM Bahauddin Nasim and General Secretary Pankaj Debnath also spoke.

RTI law

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Aziz said Finland introduced RTI in 1976 and thus they now claim themselves as a corruption-free nation in the world.

"The scenario of human rights situation is also very impressive in the countries where the law has been introduced," he said.

Addressing the briefing, Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad assured the government's all-out effort to assist the Information Commission aiming to ensure people's right to information.

He, however, said that implementation of the act in all offices across the country would take time.

Acting Information Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury told reporters that the government allocated Tk 2.2 crore for the commission.

He said measures have been taken to recruit manpower and prepare office for the commission. "We have also requested all the ministries to take necessary measures for implementation of the law," he told the briefing.

President Zillur Rahman on Wednesday formed the three-member Information Commission to implement the long-cherished RTI.

Aila-hit farmers

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The list has been prepared based on acute needs of the farmers whose crops have been badly damaged, said Mohammad Sayeed Ali, director general of the agriculture extension directorate under the ministry.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury would visit different Aila-hit areas and distribute seeds and fertilisers among the farmers. She would visit Dakop and Batiaghata upazilas in Khulna today to thatend.

"We want to restore confidence of the farmers by providing them with seeds and fertilisers. We also want to prove that the government has its responsibility for the affected people," Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

Asked about the slip with photograph, the minister said, "We have launched it so that transparency is ensured and one can't take another's aid."

Those who have failed to provide photographs have been asked to bring two photocopies of their national identity cards to get the help, she added.

The cyclone-hit farmers have already suffered a huge loss in Aila production. Many of them even may miss the Aman season because of saline water-logging in a few upazilas including the badly affected Koira in Satkhira as the damaged embankments are yet to be repaired.

According to official figures, the cyclone on May 25 damaged 1,742.53 kilometres of embankments, crops on about 3.23 lakh acres of land, 157 bridges and culverts and destroyed about 1.5 lakh livestock.

Matia has directed the lawmakers of the respective areas to complete distribution of the seeds and fertilisers before July 10 so that the farmers could start Aman production.

Hearing of the rules will be held at the same time, the counsels said.

HC terms Huda

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"No self-conscious person can make such remarks," the court said.

The bench, however, disposed of the petition saying, "We shall not issue any rule against the persons who are not aware of the dignity and authority of the High Court judges."

President of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) advocate AFM Mesbahuddin, Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council advocate Abdul Baset Majumder and Additional Attorney General Md. Rahim were present.

They told the court that since the statements of Huda and Kamaruzzaman hurt the dignity of the HC, a contempt rule should be issued against them.

Barrister Mainul Hosein, former adviser to a caretaker government, prayed to the court for disposal of the petition with some observations.

Petitioner's counsel Advocate Manzill Murshid said if the HC did not take the statements into cognisance, it will have negative impact on people.

Huda and Kamaruzzaman said the judgment on proclamation of the country's independence was not of the HC rather it was a personal verdict of the judges concerned.

The judges made observations in the verdict as if they are political leaders and the judgment was a political one, the two said.

Their remarks were published in various national dailies on June 30.

SM Zafar Sadik, a lawyer of the Supreme Court (SC), on July 1 filed the contempt of

court petition against them with the HC.

PETITION AGAINST EMAJUDDIN

Emajuddin appeared before the same HC bench at 10:30am in connection with a contempt of court petition filed against him by Abdus Salam, who had filed the writ petition regarding the proclaimer of independence on which the HC delivered its verdict.

The court exempted Emajuddin from appearing before the court in person until further order upon his application.

It also directed his counsel barrister Abdullah Al Mamun to reply to the HC rule issued earlier against him.

The same HC bench on June 24 issued a rule upon Emajuddin to explain why the same contempt proceeding should not be taken against him for making contemptuous statement about the HC judges.

JS body

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adivashi people in the name of army patrols in the area," and wanted an impartial investigation into the abduction and killing of Alkaja and Mojibar.

"We were forced to move to Sajek in the face of repression. But we cannot live there in peace either. Fear of repression and eviction still haunts us every moment," said Ajit Chakma of Gongaram Dior in Sajek during a press conference at a Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium.

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Zabiullah

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Judge Mohammad Sirajul Islam of Special Court passed the order after Ismail along with his lawyers appeared before the court and sought bail.

The lawyers submitted three petitions—one for sending him to jail or surrender, another for allocating Ismail first class division while the rest for providing him proper treatment.

On June 5 last year, the same court sentenced Ismail 10 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth of Tk 1.29 crore illegally and another three years for concealing wealth information worth Tk 1.16 crore in his statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The former secretary was also fined Tk 10 lakh, in default he has to suffer one more year in prison.

His wife Ayesha Zabiullah was also sentenced to three years' imprisonment for abetting his husband.

ACC Assistant Director Helal Uddin Sharif filed the case against the two with Ramma Police Station on November 5, 2007.

Indigenous

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GP gets nod

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received the official consent from the SEC today and look forward to an expeditious launching of the public offer and successful listing of our shares in the country's bourses," Grameenphone Chief Executive Officer Md. Odvar Hesjedal, said in a written statement yesterday.

"We are ready and will be following a fast process for fulfilling certain necessary conditions and formalities," he added.

SEC asked Grameenphone to submit its audited financial report as of December 31, 2008 within July 31 this year.

As many as 6.94 crore shares will be floated through Grameenphone's IPO, to realise Tk 486.07 crore from the capital market, said Islam, also the vice-president of DSE.

He said general investors have also been waiting eagerly for the Grameenphone issue.

Echoing him, Salauddin Ahmed Khan, professor of finance at Dhaka University, said it is a great achievement.

"It will encourage other big and multinational companies to be listed with our stock exchanges," he said.

Norway's telecom giant Telenor owns 62 percent of Grameenphone (GP), which was launched in 1997, while the remaining 38 percent is held by local Grameen Telecom. The share offloading will be proportionately spread between the two shareholders.

GP now enjoys a healthy balance sheet. Its net profit jumped by 68 percent to Tk 320 crore by the end of 2008, compared to Tk 150 crore of the year before.

Since then the company halved its IPO package, as foreign institutional investors showed the least interest due to the ongoing global economic slowdown.

Grameenphone submitted

its final prospectus in January this year. Citigroup Global Markets Bangladesh Private Limited is the issue manager of the IPO.

Saiful Islam, managing director of investment bank Equity Partners Limited, said an issue like Grameenphone was urgently needed at the moment when the market is bullish and investors are looking for new quality shares.

"It will also help boost investors' confidence in the market, who have been waiting for Grameenphone shares for a long time," he added.

The Grameenphone IPO will be a catalyst for many big national and international companies to come in and get listed with Bangladesh Capital market, said Islam, also the vice-president of DSE.

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Grameenphone submitted

Chief of JMB's

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Siddique Islam alias Bangla Bhai, at Fakirpore in the capital.

The SB disclosed the arrests of the militants and seizures of the arms and books yesterday calling in journalists to its city office and handing them a statement that contained information on the arrests. The arrestees were also paraded before journalists.

Shahadat along with Selim, a leader of JMB, formed Islam and Muslim following their dispute with some influential JMB leaders over financial matters, according to the SB statement.

However, Shahadat told journalists, "We started the outfit organising work around four months ago in an attempt to have our contribution in the country. We contacted around 15 people asking them to join."

Adivashee people migrated to Sajek, from places like Dighinala and Baghaichhari, before 1982 and now following repression and eviction, they are leaving for Mizoram in India, the statement said.

Different political and cultural organisations of Dhaka University (DU) attended the conference.

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The three other arrestees were also close aides to Bangla Bhai. But due to his organisational capability, Shahadat was made the JMB commander of the greater Rajshahi region.

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