

'PLOT TO KIDNAP JOY'

US jails Bangladeshi

BSS, Dhaka

A US court has sentenced two persons, including a Bangladeshi, over a bribery scheme for collecting information on Sajeed Wazed Joy, son of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, to kidnap and harm Joy and his family members.

The Bangladeshi national was identified as Rizvi Ahmed Ceaser, 36, son of Mohammed Ullah Mamun of Fairfield, Connecticut.

The court on Thursday sentenced Rizvi to 42 months while US national Johannes Thaler, 51, to 30 months in prison.

Both admitted to participating in a bribery scheme with Robert Lustyik, a former FBI special agent who worked with a counterintelligence squad.

Rizvi confessed that he was advised by the BNP high-command only to collect information on Joy and for that, he would get half a million US dollar. His father is a vice president of pro-BNP cultural body Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (Jasas).

According to the statements of the two accused while pleading guilty, Thaler and Lustyik between September 2011 and March 2012 solicited bribes from Rizvi, in exchange for Lustyik's agreement to provide internal, confidential documents and other confidential information to which the special agent had access.

Thaler was Lustyik's friend, and

Rizvi was an acquaintance of Thaler. Rizvi had sought confidential law enforcement information, including a "Suspicious Activity Report," about Joy.

As part of the scheme, Lustyik and Thaler exchanged text messages about how to pressure Rizvi to pay them additional money in exchange for confidential information, stated a US Justice Department press release.

Rizvi assured two of his American co-conspirators that he would pay them \$40,000 upfront and \$30,000 per month if they could accomplish their job.

He also wanted them to erase all criminal records on Arafat Rahman Koko and Tarique Rahman, sons of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, from US FBI or intelligence records.

Rizvi's imprisonment will start from April 20, 2015, and Robert Lustyik will be sentenced soon.

The case was investigated by the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, and prosecuted by Trial Attorney Emily Rae Woods of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section and Assistant US Attorney Benjamin Allee of the Southern District of New York.

The sentences were imposed by US District Judge Vincent L. Briccetti of the Southern District of New York, according to the Department of Justice.



Revellers shower each other with coloured powder to celebrate Holi -- a festival to welcome spring and a celebration of the triumph of good over evil -- at TSC of Dhaka University yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Bangladesh eyes

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"We expect India will provide us with 1,500-2,000MW electricity from this single project if we allow them to transmit power through our territory," says a senior foreign ministry official.

The proceeds from wheeling charge (the amount charged for using transmission lines) can be used for power purchase.

Officials at the foreign ministry and the Power Division said Bangladesh will benefit if it allows India to transmit electricity through its territory, as it will get wheeling charge and can also buy 20-25% of the total power to be transmitted.

Diplomatic sources say India is setting up several more hydropower plants in its northeastern region and will need to use Bangladesh territory for transmission of electricity in future.

This has prompted Dhaka to plan on setting up a massive transmission line that will be able to transmit around 20,000MW of electricity. Dhaka believes that there can be such high-capacity interconnectors in Tripura-Comilla, Bongaigaon (Assam)-Jamalpur/Dinajpur-Purnea (Bihar), Shilchar (Assam) and Fenchuganj.

These interconnectors will also allow Bangladesh to import electricity from Bhutan and Nepal.

To strengthen transmission at home, the country is building a smart grid and upgrading its transmission lines to 400 kilovolt from existing 230 kilovolt in Ashuganj-Bhulta, Aminbazar-Maowa-Mongla, Anwara-Meghnaghat, and Matarbari-Anwara-Modhunaghat.

Bangladesh is looking forward to

massive electricity exchanges in the region involving India, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar.

Officials say Nepal and Bhutan have the potential to generate 30,000MW hydropower and thus Bangladesh has initiated joint investment projects among Bangladesh-India-Nepal and Bangladesh-India-Bhutan.

The government is interested in importing electricity from two hydropower plants in Rakhine state of Myanmar. To this end, a high-level delegation led by prime minister's energy adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury last month visited the country.

"We held a number of high profile meetings, including ones with the vice president and some top ministers of Myanmar, and made proposals on gas and electricity import and initiating joint ventures in the energy sector," said a member of the Bangladesh delegation, wishing anonymity.

"We received positive response from their side. Myanmar will soon send a technical team to Bangladesh to assess the feasibility of our proposals," he told The Daily Star.

Besides, the government is trying to import electricity under the Saarc Framework Agreement on Energy Cooperation (Electricity) and Bimstec Trans-Power Exchange and Development project.

The cabinet will soon ratify the Saarc electricity deal to pave the way for electricity exchanges among the Saarc countries by setting up common grid, using which excess power in one region can easily be used to meet deficit elsewhere.

Sources said New Delhi has made a move to facilitate integrated power

grid for Saarc member states to begin cross-border trading on the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX).

The move will initially enable short-term buying and selling of power with Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan as these countries already have grid connectivity with India.

The IEX has sought consent from the Indian government for cross-border trading of 120MW with Bhutan and 50MW each with Bangladesh and Nepal.

A sub-regional strategic alliance of Nepal, India and Bangladesh have decided to jointly exploit their hydropower sector and use water resources management for mutual advantage, including jointly developing and financing projects in the Ganges river basin.

Similarly, Bhutan, India and Bangladesh have agreed to work in the Brahmaputra basin under a framework named Bhutan, India and Bangladesh (BIB) Initiative.

According to foreign ministry officials, Bimstec member states -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand -- are expected to ink a Memorandum of Understanding on Trans-power Exchange.

Dhaka will host the taskforce meeting on March 16 on the Bimstec Trans-power Exchange to sign the MoU, which will enable the member states to share their surplus electricity with each other through their national grids.

Power import would serve as one of the many sources of the country's energy security by 2030. According to the government's plan, the country would have 39,000MW of power, nearly six times the amount today.

Short-term

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will be set up to promote regional power trade, energy efficiency, and energy conservation.

Bangladesh has been working on the agreement, to be tabled in the cabinet for approval shortly, according to diplomatic and government sources.

Currently, there are separate grids connecting India-Bhutan, India-Nepal and India-Bangladesh.

And India's power trading with Saarc members Sri Lanka and Pakistan will open after linking those countries in the grids. The India-Sri Lanka grid will be connected via undersea cables.

The implementation of the Saarc deal has been slower than India hoped due to some political issues in Nepal and the foot-dragging by Pakistan in approving the agreement, diplomatic sources in India said.

Bangladesh has been importing 500MW of electricity from India since October 2013 through the first ever 400KV double-circuit cross border grid between Baharampur, India and Bheramara of Bangladesh.

The two neighbours have finalised another deal, under which Bangladesh will import 100MW electricity from Tripura through a second cross-border grid to be set-up from Suryamaninagar, Tripura to Comilla in Bangladesh.

Officials of India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal met in New Delhi on January 30-31 and discussed power trade and connectivity. Diplomatic sources said the four-nation move will make it easier for all the Saarc nations to have a common power grid.

The meeting also agreed to jointly explore hydropower in the region and share electricity between the countries on an equitable basis.

Criminals attack Feni journalist

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Criminals beat up and hacked a local journalist at Laskarhat Sahapur in Feni Sadar upazila yesterday.

Critically injured journalist Rashedul Hasan, 25, works for a Feni-based online news portal. He was first taken to Feni Sadar Hospital and then shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Rashedul, who also runs Motobi Union Parishad information and service centre, went to it to fill in the forms for those who want to migrate in

Saudi Arabia around 11:30.

Some five to six attackers called Rashedul out of the office and forcibly took him to a nearby place. They then beat him up and stabbed him indiscriminately.

The reason behind the attack could not be known immediately.

Sub-Inspector Ziaul Haque of Sadar Model Police Station said they were yet to receive any information about the incident.

Feni Press Club condemned the attack and demanded the arrest of the culprits.

India book last 8 spot

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barrage from the West Indies, which wound back the clock to their halcyon days at a venue their great pace attacks relished.

Jerome Taylor (two for 33) sparked the West Indies early on, claiming the wickets of opener Shikhar Dhawan (nine) and Rohit Sharma (seven), while Andre Russell also claimed two for 43.

However, their cause wasn't helped by conceding 19 wides, nine from Russell's bowling.

Such a competitive match had seemed highly improbable when the West Indies slumped to 85 for seven.

However, a fighting half-century from Holder, batting at number nine, and some shoddy Indian fielding, helped revive the West Indian cause.

Holder's highest score in one-day internationals was just 22 until the West Indies' previous match against South Africa, but made it consecutive half-centuries with some clean hitting.

He was the last man to fall, caught at long on by Virat Kohli for 57 from the bowling of Ravi Jadeja (2-27), having faced 64 balls and hit four fours and three sixes.

Holder's recovery mission was assisted by India also dropping four catches.

Opener Chris Gayle's innings of 21

at the top of the order set the tone for a number of the West Indian batsmen, who were seemingly content to gift their opponents cheap dismissals as India's title defence continued to gather momentum.

Gayle appeared to hold the key to his side posting a big total, and there were danger signs when he struggled to get bat on ball early, playing and missing repeatedly against opening bowlers Umesh Yadav (two for 42) and Mohammed Shami (three for 35).

Despite losing partner Dwayne Smith for just six, continuing his lean tournament, Gayle reverted to type when he tried to hit his way out of trouble.

He played a couple of big shots, but was also dropped on the boundary twice in quick succession.

Another near chance ended with the run out of non-striker Marlon Samuels (two), after the big left-hander didn't respond to his partner's call for a single.

Gayle's own luck ran out when he lofted another shot high to the boundary, where Mohit Sharma completed the catch from the bowling of the returning Shami.

His departure left the West Indies reeling at 35 for three and Denesh Ramdin was bowled by Yadav from the very next ball.

Historic 7th March today

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declared in a thunderous voice at a mammoth rally at the Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) that day.

The vigorous speech inspired people of all walks of life to prepare for the war that the Pakistani regime would launch on the unarmed Bangalees 18 days later, committing one of the worst genocides in history for the next nine months.

Shortly before his arrest on the black night of March 25, Bangabandhu declared the Liberation War.

Bangabandhu's March 7 speech has been selected as one of the most rousing and inspirational wartime speeches in the last 2,500 years. The dynamic speech had changed the course of the country's history.

To mark the day, different political parties, socio-cultural organisations and student and professional bodies have chalked out various programmes, including laying wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu and holding discussions and rallies.

The ruling Awami League will hoist national and party flags atop the

Bangabandhu Bhaban and party offices and place wreaths at Sheikh Mujib's portrait on Bangabandhu Bhaban premises in the capital's Dhanmondi in the morning.

The party will hold a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan at 3:00pm where Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will speak as chief guest.

President Abdul Hamid in his message for the day said the March 7 speech would remain in the history of the Bangalee nation for ever.

Pointing to Bangabandhu's long-cherished dream to turn the country into "Sonar Bangla", he called for continued efforts to remove poverty, hunger and illiteracy from the society.

In her message, Hasina, Bangabandhu's eldest daughter, said the March 7 speech is one of the best political speeches ever in the world history.

"Let's get united again to turn Bangladesh into a golden Bangla that Bangabandhu dreamt to build, by implementing Vision-2021 and Vision-2041," she said.



Some of the 108 Rohingya intruders Border Guard Bangladesh personnel detained at Balukhali of Ukhiya in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

108 Rohingyas held for illegal entry

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jeeps," said Khaliqzaman.

He could not say how many Rohingyas escaped in the other vehicles.

The BGB arrested vehicle owner Shah Alamgir at the scene and later filed a case with Ukhiya Police Station accusing 30 people.

Lt Col Khandker Saiful Alam of BGB 17 Battalion said even though Rohingya intrusion was almost an

everyday matter, the problem deteriorated over the last month and a half.

He alleged that a human trafficking gang was operating under the protection of Palonkhali Union Parishad Chairman Gafur Uddin, also a local BNP leader.

Gafur, however, claimed that he was being wrongfully implicated. "I was not even in Cox's Bazar then. I am in no way involved in the incident," he told

The Daily Star.

According to Burmese Kaladan Press Network, the BGB pushed back over 700 Rohingyas in February.

On February 8, newspapers reported push back of 18 Rohingyas by the BGB.

Rohingyas do not have citizenship in Myanmar. Several rights bodies, the UN and the USA have repeatedly requested Myanmar to grant Rohingyas citizenship.

Bangladesh became a Rohingya destination in the wake of religious persecution in Arakan of Myanmar. An estimated one million Rohingyas live there.

According to the UNHCR, the UN wing for refugees, over two lakh Rohingyas refugees, with only 30,000 documented, live in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh claims that there are over five lakh Rohingyas here.