

# ACC arrests BJMC GM for Tk 7.43cr scam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday arrested a suspended general manager of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) in the capital's Kakrail in a case accusing him and three others of misappropriating around Tk 7.43 crore.

The embezzlement took place at Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills Ltd in Khulna from May 2, 2012 to August 12, 2014 while Jahangir Hossain was a deputy manager there, says the case statement.

The remaining three are now posted at two jute mills and are at large, said ACC Assistant Director Md Shafi Ullah, the case's investigation officer who made the arrest.

They are managers (production) Liyakat Hossain and Khandakar

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina meets visiting speakers and deputy speakers of 19 IPU member states and UN Assistant Secretary General Gerda Verburg at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

# No relief for two mayors

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Substances Act.

Both the charge sheets were accepted around two years ago.

Following the Apex Court verdicts in their favour last month, the mayors went to their respective offices yesterday morning.

Sylhet Mayor Ariful was lucky enough to sit in his mayoral chair for a couple of hours, but Rajshahi Mayor Bulbul found his office under lock and key. When he managed to enter the office after a five-hour wait, he was informed within minutes that he had been suspended again.

Apart from the two, Habiganj Municipality Mayor GK Gaus was suspended yesterday for the second time.

Over the last couple of years, a large number of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami-backed mayors, chairmen and vice chairmen were suspended under two specific clauses of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009.

While enforcing the Act, the LGRD ministry's Local Government Division has all along been strict about the elected representatives backed by the BNP and the Jamaat.

According to Section 12 and 13 of the Act, a mayor or a councillor, if convicted or charge-sheeted in criminal cases, can be suspended.

The Act also says any elected representative can be removed from office for skipping three consecutive general meetings without any valid ground.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, local government expert Prof Tofail Ahmed said the decision to suspend the mayors was not a good one.

"Under the 2009 Act, a mayor or a councillor, if convicted or charge-sheeted in criminal cases, can be suspended. But it is not mandatory. It was improper to suspend the mayors on the very day they resumed office following court verdicts.

It was an unwise political decision, he

Total city corporation	11
BNP-backed mayor	6 (Rajshahi, Sylhet, Gazipur, Khulna, Barisal, Comilla)
AL-backed mayor	5 (Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Chittagong, Rangpur, Narayanganj)
Suspended mayor	3 (Rajshahi, Sylhet, Gazipur - all BNP-backed)

noted. Tofail pointed out that the ministry actually served the interest of those who discharged the mayoral responsibilities in the absence of the two.

"All are equal in the eye of law. But I think laws are being strictly followed in case of pro-opposition people," he said.

Sylhet Mayor Ariful and Habiganj Municipality Mayor Gaus went through almost similar experience in the last couple of years.

They were suspended on January 7, 2015 after a Sylhet court accepted charge sheets against them in two cases -- one under the Explosive Substances Act and the other for the killing of former Finance Minister AMS Kibria.

The two were in jail when the LGRD ministry issued the suspension order. They got bail from the High Court on January 4 this year after spending around two years in prison.

Early last month, Ariful filed a writ petition with the HC, challenging the suspension. The HC on March 13 stayed the suspension for six months.

The government then filed a petition with the Supreme Court, seeking a stay on the HC order.

The apex court on March 23 upheld the HC order, clearing the way for Ariful to resume duties as the Sylhet mayor.

Both Ariful and Gaus were again suspended by the ministry yesterday, around 10 days after a special tribunal in Sunamganj accepted the revised charge sheet against them in the case over the grenade attack on a rally of AL leader Suranjit Sengupta in Sunamganj in 2004.

Enamul Habib, chief executive officer of Sylhet City Corporation, told this correspondent that he received the ministry's suspension order around 2:30pm, about three hours after Ariful resumed duty.

Asked, Ariful said, "I could discharge my responsibilities only for a couple of hours after more than two years. I am preparing for a legal battle against the government order.

"I was shocked by the suspension order, as I got a permanent bail in the case."

Rajshahi Mayor Bulbul had even a tougher day.

He had to wait at the RCC Chief Executive Officer's room for around five hours, as he found his office locked around 10:00am.

Bulbul entered his office, having the door lock broken at about 3:00pm. A few minutes later, ABM Sharifuddin, CEO of the RCC, informed him of the ministry's suspension order.

Contacted, Sharifuddin said, "I don't know who locked the office or when it happened."

Earlier, Bulbul was suspended on May 7, 2015 after courts accepted charge sheets against him in three cases, including one for the murder of police constable Siddhartha Sarker.

Later, Bulbul filed a writ petition with the High Court, challenging the suspension order.

The HC on March 10 last year declared the suspension illegal. The government then moved to the Supreme Court which upheld the HC verdict on March 5 this year.

Yesterday, the LGRD ministry sus-

ended the Rajshahi mayor once again, citing that Rajshahi Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 accepted charge sheets against him in two cases filed more than two years back under the Explosive Substances Act.

Bulbul, also president of Rajshahi City BNP, is accused in 17 cases filed over incidents of arson and violence during the anti-government agitation in 2015. Charge sheets in five of the cases have so far been accepted by courts.

Talking to reporters in the afternoon, he said, "I was granted bail in all of the cases against me. The government has violated the Supreme Court order by suspending me. I will again go for legal battle against the government decision."

Of the 11 city corporations, BNP-backed candidates won mayoral posts in six and AL-backed ones in five cities.

MA Mannan, BNP-backed mayor of Gazipur City Corporation, was suspended on August 19, 2015 after a Gazipur court accepted a charge sheet against him in a case over an arson attack on a passenger bus in the city on February 4 that year.

On November 2, 2015, BNP-supported Khulna City Corporation Mayor Moniruzzaman Moni was suspended after he had been charged with criminal offences. He regained his mayoral post early this year as the HC stayed the suspension order.

According to the LGRD ministry's data, 24 mayors of city corporations and municipalities, 28 upazila chairmen, 13 upazila vice chairmen, and over 150 union parishad chairmen and UP members were suspended till mid-last year, as they were charge-sheeted in different cases, including the ones for arson and murders between 2014 and 2015.

Almost all of them are loyal to either the BNP or the Jamaat.

[Our Rajshahi and Sylhet correspondents contributed to the report]

# We stand strong against militancy in the name of Islam

## PM tells visiting speakers and deputy speakers of IPU member states

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday conveyed the visiting speakers and deputy speakers of national parliaments of different countries her strong stance against terrorism in the name of Islam and told them about her government's initiatives for ensuring public welfare.

United Arab Emirates' (UAE) Speaker Amal Al Qubaisi, Indian Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan, and speakers and deputy speakers from 19 IPU member states and UN Assistant Secretary General Gerda Verburg met her at the Gono Bhaban.

PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meetings.

During his meeting with the PM, UAE Speaker Qubaisi said terrorism and extremism were causing big problems, and referring to the Syrian issue, added that he believed in a peaceful solution through dialogue.

In reply, Hasina said vested quarters were doing arms business with the blood of Muslims.

She also narrated how she and her family were the worst victims of terrorism.

Hasina regretted that some derailed people were engaged in terrorist acts, and said her government involved people from all walks of life, including imams, teachers and guardians, to create awareness against such social menaces.

Qubaisi said Hasina was a role model when it came to women

empowerment and development in education and health sectors.

Indian Lok Sabha speaker during her meeting with Hasina narrated that their parliament members were in a festive mood while ratifying the Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) and had passed the bill unanimously.

"All members of the Lok Sabha were very happy to support the bill and it was really historic and remarkable," she said.

Welcoming the Lok Sabha speaker, the prime minister extended her gratitude to the people and the government of India for their help during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

During Hasina's meeting with speakers and deputy speakers of national parliaments of 19 countries of the IPU member states and UN Assistant Secretary General Gerda Verburg, Hasina said her government had taken short-, mid- and long-term initiatives for the country's development and was working to ensure people's socio-economic progress.

During the meeting, the delegation members highly appreciated the government of Bangladesh for the successful arrangement of such a large conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Dhaka and thanked the prime minister for the overwhelming hospitality provided to them.

They also lauded the efforts of the prime minister in taking Bangladesh to a new height in terms of development and prosperity.

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# Rid Pharma

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filed for manufacturing toxic paracetamol syrup, to surrender before the trial court within seven days.

Three other fugitive accused are Rid Pharma's director Abdul Gani, and pharmacists Mahbubul Islam and Enamul Haque.

The government in January filed an appeal with the HC, challenging the lower court verdict.

From June to August in 2009, 28 children across the country died of renal failures caused by the intake of the paracetamol syrup and suspension allegedly manufactured by Rid Pharma.

On July 22, 2009, the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) sealed off Rid's factory in BSCIC area of Brahmanbaria following wide media coverage of the children's death, and findings of Dhaka Shishu (Children) Hospital physician Prof Mohammad Hanif that Rid Pharma's Temset had toxic substance.

In August that year, Shafiqul Islam, then superintendent of the Drug Administration, filed the case with the Drug Court and only five prosecution witnesses testified after the court indicted the five accused in March 2011.

On November 28 last year, the Drug Court acquitted all the five, saying the prosecution utterly failed to prove the charge against them.

Negligence, inefficiency and incompetence of the Drug Administration in dealing with the case led to their acquittal, the judge said in the verdict.

Two officials of Drug Administration involved in the case against Rid Pharmaceuticals violated due legal procedure, and showed sheer negligence and incompetence in dealing with the case, the verdict said.

The two officials are Shafiqul Islam and Altaf Hossain. Both of them were drug superintendents in 2009. Shafiqul is now an assistant director of the Directorate General of Drug Administration while Altaf is a deputy director, said a DGDA director in December last year.

# Sermons must not go against law

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[imam] will not deliver any speech which is contrary to the laws of the land," the court observed.

If anybody makes derogatory comments on Islam and Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) or any other religion, he or she can be brought to book, it said, adding, "Nobody has the right to take the law in his own hand and nobody should make derogatory comments about any religion."

Even if any person does not believe in any religion, he or she should not make any disparaging comments about religion, the HC said.

The court made the observations while delivering the verdict on the death reference and appeals of eight convicts in the 2013 Rajib murder case.

The HC upheld death penalty of two convicts, life imprisonment for one and various jail terms for five others. It observed that seven convicts in Rajib murder case "have gone to the dogs" due to their parents' failure to give them proper education.

Rajib, who was an activist of Shahbagh movement and used to write against Jamaat-Shibir and war criminals on different blogs under the pseudonym Thaba Baba, was hacked to death near his Mirpur home on February 15, 2013.

The condemned convicts are: Redwanul Azad Rana, and Faisal Bin Nayem alias Dweep.

Among the jailed convicts, Mufti Jasimuddin Rahmani, chief of banned militant outfit Ansarulhul Bangla Team, was awarded five years' imprisonment as he was found guilty of provoking Rajib's murder with his sermons.

Maksudul Hasan alias Anik was given life term imprisonment. Four other convicts -- Ehsan Reza Rumman, Nafis Imtiaz, Nayem Sikdar Irad and Sadman Yasir Mahmud -- had been sentenced to different jail terms.

Apart from Jasimuddin, all the seven convicts were students of North South University in 2013.

dence and arguments made before it, that the seven were meritorious students and their parents were well educated and in good positions.

"It is not apprehended why they [seven convicts] have gone to this wrong path. We [judges], like many others, think that their parents are responsible for it. Their [parents] duty was to give proper education to their children, but they failed to do that. Therefore, their children [convicts] have gone to the dogs," said the HC bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Md Jahangir Hossain.

The judges said their parents were busy with their lives and failed to give proper attention to their children.

They said the parents had imposed a certain education and other things on their children without caring for what the children want to do or study. This made the children reactive. This practice of the parents should be stopped, the HC observed.

Parents are the primary teachers of their children and they have to carry out their responsibilities in this regard, it added.

At the same time, everyone, including the state, should ensure quality education and make people aware of the country's political atmosphere, population control, true history of the country's independence and religious harmony, the HC observed.

The inspector general of police should appoint honest, sincere and experienced officers, who are committed to working for the people, to investigate such cases, it said.

"Then such crimes would be reduced from the society and the country...," it said.

Citing the defence's arguments, the HC said three investigation officers probed the case. Jasimuddin used to deliver sermons against bloggers but the investigation officers failed to provide the evidence, the HC said.

It was a planned murder. The offence committed by the accused was horrendous, heinous and atrocious.

Therefore, we don't find any extraneous ground to commute the sentences and also don't find any reason to interfere with the conviction and sentences handed down by the trial court," the HC bench said.

**PARENTS DISAPPOINTED** Rajib's father Mohammad Nazim Uddin expressed disappointment over the High Court judgment and said he did not get justice.

"This is an influenced and split verdict," he told journalists. "The government says it has a zero-tolerance policy against militancy, but I did not find its reflection...."

Asked whether he would appeal against the verdict, he said he would decide after consulting his lawyers about moving an appeal for higher sentences of the convicts who were awarded different jail terms.

The HC yesterday rejected Nazim Uddin's petition for enhancing punishment of six jailed convicts.

The lawyer for condemned Rana told The Daily Star that Rana would file an appeal with the apex court.

The lawyer for Anik said he would move an appeal for Anik if his parents instructed him.

**BACKGROUND** Rajib was a key organiser of Shahbagh movement that began on February 5, 2013, hours after Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah was given life sentence for committing war crimes in 1971, a punishment that was deemed lenient.

He graduated in architecture from Asia Pacific University in 2004.

After the killing, online Jamaat-Shibir activists and some pro-Jamaat and BNP newspapers tried to justify the murder by branding him "an atheist".

Rajib's father filed the case on February 16, 2013, and police pressed charges against the eight on January 25, 2014. The Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court framed charges against the eight and the case was later transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 of Dhaka.

# 20 tortured

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psychotic, or it could be related to rivalry for the control of shrine," Hameed said, adding that the investigation into the killings near the city of Sargodha was continuing.

Local police station chief Shamsh Joya said the victims, whose clothes were torn and bloodstained, appeared to have been given intoxicants.

"We suspect that the victims had been given some intoxicants before they were murdered, but we will wait for a forensics report to confirm this suspicion," he added.

"The victims were brutally tortured to death and apparently the clothes of some victims were torn off during it," he said. Six of the dead were from the same family.

Joya said the shrine was built some two and a half years ago. Waheed -- a one-time employee of the national election commission -- took it over upon completion.

Local rescue service official Mazhar Shah said Waheed used to meet devotees once or twice a month and used violence to "heal" them.

"Local people say that Waheed used to beat the visitors who came to him for treatment of various physical or spiritual ailments," Shah told reporters in televised comments.

"Sometimes he would remove the clothes of his visitors and burn them." Television footage showed scattered shoes, clothes, sheets and cots in the yard of the white-painted domed shrine as police vehicles and police commandos surrounded the premises, sited amid green farmland.

**SUFITRADITION** Visiting shrines and offering alms for the poor -- and cash to the custodians -- remains a very popular custom in Pakistan. Many believe this will help get their prayers answered.

Punjab Minister for Religious Affairs Zaeem Qadri said intelligence agencies along with police and the local government were investigating all aspects of the case.

# Trudeau

FROM PAGE 16

"I think he was the only kid in school that we could beat up," Perry, who describes himself as half-Canadian, told Kimmel. "You know, I'm not bragging about this. This is terrible. I was a stupid kid, I didn't want to beat him up."

Two weeks after Perry made that revelation, Trudeau issued a friendly challenge Saturday.

"I've been giving it some thought, and you know what, who hasn't wanted to punch Chandler? How about a rematch," Trudeau tweeted using the name of Perry's character on "Friends."

Perry hasn't responded so far -- he's probably covering in terror at the thought of the Prime Minister's security.

Trudeau tweeted about the rematch on April Fools' Day, so there's a chance he may not actually meant it.