

SATKHIRA MEDICAL COLLEGE HOSPITAL ACC sues 5 for embezzling Tk 6.06 crore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed a case against former superintendent of Satkhira Medical College Hospital Sheikh Shahjahan Ali and four businessmen on charges of misappropriating Tk 6.06 crore by faking the procurement of a machine and software.

The businessmen are: Abdus Sattar Sarkar, proprietor of Mercantile Trade International, his son Jaher Uddin Sarkar, owner of Bengal Scientific and Surgical, grandson Ahsan Habib and Jaher's brother-in-law Asadur Rahman, proprietor of Universal Trade Corporation.

The four were sued by the graft watchdog last month for allegedly misappropriating about Tk 4.49 crore during the purchase of a heavy machine for Rangpur Medical College in June last year.

According to the case statement, Shahjahan, now an officer on special duty at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in Dhaka, took an initiative in 2017-18 fiscal year to buy a machine and software named Picture Archiving and Communication System without having the approval of the DGHS.

The former superintendent floated

Grief, despair rack families

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She came to the capital four years ago and became a machine operator at a garment factory.

"This is a big blow to my life of hardship," she said.

On Wednesday afternoon, Bishwajit took Tk 100 from her said he would buy a pair of sandals.

He was walking nearby when the cylinder used for inflating balloons exploded near their slum in the capital's Rupnagar.

A total of seven children were killed in the explosion on road 11. At least 20 others were injured.

Six of the other injured are being treated at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Six-year-old Sadikur, who lost his right arm, probably cannot fathom his loss.

He is being treated at National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation. Lying on his bed at the ICU, he kept staring at his bandaged arms yesterday.

Sadikur took Tk 20 from his day labourer father to buy a balloon.

"After buying the balloon, he gave

a tender and the Mercantile Trade and Bengal Scientific filed bids. Mercantile was awarded a Tk 7 crore work order for providing the machine and software.

On September 4 last year, the items were shown supplied and a bill was submitted the same day.

Shahjahan passed the bill and gave Tk 6.06 crore, the amount after deduction of VAT and income tax, to Mercantile on September 16, says the case statement.

On May 15 this year, an ACC team and an investigation team of the DGHS visited the Satkhira hospital, but did not find the machine there.

Police rescue

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accommodation or relatives living here, she was compelled to chain and leave her daughter at the launch terminal.

After begging during the day, she would take her child back and stay at a shrine in the area at night, she added.

Contacted, Anup Adhikari, court sub-inspector in Narayanaganj, said the mother and child were taken to the district's Senior Judicial Magistrate Court, which sent them to a women and children development centre in Gazipur.

back his father Tk 15," his mother Asma Begum said, adding that he went back to the balloon seller with the other children of the area minutes before the explosion.

Asma said she didn't have the money needed for proper treatment of her son.

ONE MORE DIED

Eight-year-old Nihar Uddin, who was injured in the blast, died at DMCH early yesterday, raising the death toll to seven.

Another boy, who could not be identified on Wednesday, was Rifat, 8, DMCH officials said.

He was the son of Soru Mia of Netrakona's Mohanganj upazila.

He was admitted to the hospital with severe injuries to his eyes, said Inspector Bachchu Mia of DMCH police outpost.

He was a second grader.

Meanwhile, Sub-inspector of Rupnagar Police Station Sumon Banik filed a case against the balloon seller Abu Sayeed, who is also under treatment at DMCH in police custody.

He lost part of his left arm and sustained injuries to his stomach.

JS body summons

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Abdul Hye Bacchu for his involvement in the BASIC Bank scam. But the ACC is yet to take any action against him. That's why the standing committee today decided to summon the ACC chairman and ACC investigators to know about the anti-graft body's stance in this regard," AL lawmaker Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, who was at the meeting, told The Daily Star.

He added that the HC has so far issued three clear directives about Bacchu's involvement in the scam.

"The committee wants to know what actions the Anti-Corruption Commission have taken in line with the High Court directives," Taposh said.

Contacted, ACC boss Iqbal Mahmood told this newspaper that they would respond to the parliamentary body's directive in line with the ACC Act.

In the four years between 2009 and 2013, Tk 4,500 crore was swindled out of BASIC Bank, once a healthy public bank. But what followed was more shocking than the country's biggest loan scam itself.

Multiple investigations found that Bacchu, who was the chairman of the bank at the time, literally plundered the bank with the help of other members of the Board of Directors.

In 2015, the ACC filed 56 cases

in connection with the scam, but ironically neither Bacchu nor any of the board members were accused.

Disappointed at the sluggish probe and ACC's failure to catch the big fish, the HC during a hearing in June 2018 said, "We have to cover our faces in shame."

The HC in June 2018 reiterated its earlier directive on the ACC to bring Bacchu and the bank's three top officials to book in connection with the scam.

The HC in November 2015 issued a rule asking as to why Bacchu would not be implicated in cases filed over loan scam worth Tk 154 crore.

In yesterday's meeting, the parliamentary body suggested that title deeds now be computer printed instead of written by hand.

It also recommended forming a four-member sub-committee, led by committee member Shahiduzzaman Sarker, to find the people responsible for public sufferings at land offices and easing service delivery.

Other sub-committee members are Abdul Majid Khan, Shamsheen Haider Patwary, and Begum Rumeen Farhana.

The parliamentary committee also suggested presenting a report on how the land registration fees are fixed in its next meeting.

Crisis-wracked Chile pulls out as APEC, COP25 host

AFP, Santiago

Chile pulled out of hosting two major international summits on Wednesday as it struggled to restore order after more than ten days of civil unrest that left at least 23 dead.

President Sebastian Pinera said "common sense" dictated the decision to withdraw from the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit and the Cop 25 climate change conference.

The UN said it was now looking at alternative venues.

US President Donald Trump had said he was planning to meet Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to

lock down a "phase one" agreement at the November 16-17 APEC meeting that would partially have ended an 18-month trade war between the world's two biggest economies.

The White House said it looked forward to finalizing an agreement "within the same timeframe," although analysts Eurasia Group said that may not happen until the end of the year.

APEC said it supported Chile's decision but gave no indication there would be a replacement summit this year, saying only that Malaysia would host the 2020 event.

SC upholds Azhar's death penalty

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which opposed the country's liberation -- in Rangpur during the 1971 war.

Following yesterday's verdict, he now can file a petition with the SC seeking a review of the judgment. The petition will have to be filed within 15 days after the convict receives the certified copy of the verdict, according to court sources.

If the SC rejects the review petition, Azhar, an assistant secretary general of Jamaat, can seek president's clemency. If the president does not grant mercy, the SC verdict will be executed.

As a norm, Azhar, now in Gazipur's Kashimpur Jail-2, was not brought to the SC yesterday when the verdict was delivered.

He heard about the judgement through radio and one of his representatives, said Shishir Manir, a defence lawyer for the Jamaat leader, while talking to The Daily Star.

BNP leader Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, the principal defence lawyer for Azhar, told this correspondent that his client was not involved in any

offence and that they would move a review petition.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told reporters at his office that Azhar was convicted on the basis of specific charges and the testimonies of eye witnesses.

He hoped that the SC would release the full text of the verdict soon.

Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star that the government would execute the apex court verdict on completion of all legal procedures.

Expressing satisfaction at the judgement, he said Bangladesh has moved one step ahead in ensuring justice and rule of law.

Five Jamaat leaders have already been executed for committing crimes during the Liberation War while another senior leader, Delawar Hossain Sayeedee, is serving jail until death for the same offences.

As a leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha and the Al-Badr, Azhar played a significant role in the atrocities and aided the Pakistani occupation troops in committing horrific crimes,

according to ICT-1 which gave capital punishment to him.

The court said the verdict was delivered against him for his involvement in killing 1,400 civilians in Jharuarbeel, a wetland in Rangpur's Badarganj upazila.

Terrorized of the marauding Pakistan army and its local collaborators, they fled their homes and took shelter at Jharuarbeel, but men, women and children from a dozen villages still could not save themselves from the cold-blooded savagery on the summer noon of April 17, 1971.

Pakistani army men and armed members of local Chhatra Sangha surrounded the villagers crouching in the swamp bushes and unleashed a bloodbath. Within five hours, they killed some 1,200 innocent people.

The man who planned it all is Azhar and he himself took part in the massacre. He and his men also picked up more than 200 Hindu people and students from the area and killed them after taking them to an unknown place.

The SC court upheld the verdict.

The apex court also upheld his death sentence for the killing of at least 14 people in Badarganj upazila in Rangpur and genocide when four Hindu teachers of Rangpur Carmichael College and wife of one teacher were killed. Azhar was a student of the teachers and a resident of the upazila.

The SC also upheld his five-year imprisonment for torturing a freedom fighter and his brother.

The court, however, acquitted him from another charge of raping a woman in Rangpur Town Hall. The tribunal had given him 25-year jail for the charge.

Two war crimes tribunals have so far delivered 40 verdicts against 94 people. Of them, 68 have been sentenced to death. Twenty-nine appeals are now pending with the SC.

Jamaat leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami, Abdul Quader Mollah, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahed, Mir Quasem Ali and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury have been executed for war crimes.

without charge.

In total, several thousand people were locked up -- including children as young as nine -- with most subsequently released. There have also been allegations of torture by Indian troops, something the government denies.

Access to around half of mobile phones was only restored on October 14 and the internet remains cut for the Kashmir Valley's more than seven million people.

The UN High Commission for Human Rights in Geneva said Tuesday that it was "extremely concerned" at the situation.

"We urge the Indian authorities to unlock the situation and fully restore the rights that are currently being denied," it said.

J&K formally stripped of state status

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deployed tens of thousands of government forces and issued a high alert for rebel attacks and anti-India protests.

Police and paramilitary troops in bulletproof gear patrolled the streets in the densely populated old quarters of the main city of Srinagar and other towns across the volatile Kashmir Valley.

Kashmir was "the only place where terrorism killed around 40,000 people in the last three decades. So many mothers lost their sons... For how long could have just kept watching the innocents die?" Modi said.

"We are happy that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are moving towards a new future from today onwards. Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir today are taking steps for

their bright future," Modi said.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since 1947 and has sparked two wars and numerous flare-ups between the two nuclear-armed foes, most recently in February when they conducted tit-for-tat air strikes.

In early August, Modi's Hindu nationalist government stripped Indian-administered Kashmir of its special status in the constitution, detaining thousands of people -- including almost all local political leaders -- and cutting telecommunications.

It also announced that from October 31, the state would become two so-called union territories: Ladakh to the east bordering China -- which also claims part of it -- and Jammu and Kashmir in the west.

Almost three months after Modi's surprise move, which came only weeks after he was re-elected in a landslide, hundreds of Kashmiri politicians and others remain in detention, mostly

qualification, when they seek driving licences, he said.

The law says offences under the provisions 84, 98 and 105 are not bailable.

But if drivers are not granted bail, then there will be a further shortage of drivers, Shahjahan said.

So, the federation's suggestion is to grant drivers conditional bail, he added.

Shahjahan said their position was to not oppose enforcement of the law but to make sure that workers are not harassed due to its enforcement, and the law is also not being misused.

He said investigation of accident-related sensational cases has to be carried out jointly by police and Accident Research Institute of Buet, stressing the need for formulating a set of rules for the RTA quickly.

Shahjahan said the federation would closely observe law enforcement agencies' role in enforcing the act.

He also urged the government to implement the 111-point recommendations of a committee formed over reducing accidents and bringing back discipline on the roads.

He called on Republicans to rally behind him even as he faced the embarrassing likelihood of becoming the third president in history to be impeached and placed on trial for removal in the Senate, over an alleged extortion scheme to obtain Ukraine's help to get him reelected in 2020.

Consequently, the law says drivers cannot operate a vehicle without "appointment letter" while an owner cannot employ a driver without the letter.

However, the law does not specify punishment for violations, he said, adding that they have proposed fining the person Tk 5,000.

In case of accident caused by overloading of a vehicle, there will be up to three years' imprisonment or up to a Tk 3 lakh fine or both, Shahjahan said.

The law says drivers must pass class-VII.

A conductor, who needs to pass class-V only, can develop driving competency from years of practical experiences. So, the federation's proposal is to consider experiences of such conductors, who lack educational

measure, although former Republican Justin Amash, now an independent, supported it.

The inquiry now moves into the public eye -- giving Americans the chance to hear on live television the evidence against Trump.

The House Intelligence Committee, which has led the inquiry so far, will host open hearings, presenting witnesses and documentary evidence and allowing Republicans to challenge the case against Trump.

Congress formalises

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"The Greatest Witch Hunt In American History!" he boomed on Twitter.

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Holding Trump 'accountable' - Trump is accused of withholding military aid to compel Ukraine to mount an embarrassing corruption probe against his Democratic election