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DR ASIM AFFAIRS [2015-16]

PPP's DR ASIM HUSSAIN ARRESTED:

On 26th August 2015, former federal minister and Chairman of the provincial Higher Education Commission [HEC] Dr Asim Hussain was picked up and detained by about 15 plain-clothed men, which arrived at the HEC office in four vehicles around noon that day; the personnel belonged to an intelligence agency or some other LEA. Before the team arrived at the HEC office, the building was surrounded by Rangers to ward off any potential resistance by Dr Asim's armed guards. The NAB had denied having anything to do with Dr Asim's detention.

Dr Asim Hussain was chairing a meeting of the search committee for vice chancellors which was also attended by other high-ranking officials of the HEC. The meeting's objective was to select a new vice chancellor of the Dow University of Health Sciences (DUHS) when the raid took place.

Personnel of the raiding team asked the attendees of the meeting to switch off their mobile phones following which the Sindh HEC Chairman was whisked away to an undisclosed location. Later, the NAB sources verified that Dr Asim was in the custody of the anti-corruption watchdog and that he might be shifted to Islamabad with the Federal Investigation Agency [FIA] team. The NAB officials also conducted a raid on Karachi's Civic Centre to seize records of the properties owned by Dr Asim Hussain.

Dr Asim was booked to fly back to Dubai next day; he was arrested from Sindh's HEC office which he was heading after higher education was made a provincial subject following the 18th Amendment. He was taken to an undisclosed location for interrogation; he was being investigated for alleged involvement in money-laundering, '*china-cutting*', and illegally issuing licenses for unlawful CNG stations across Sindh during his ministerial tenure with the PPP government during 2008-13.

An intelligence official claimed Dr Asim was also "*aiding MQM workers, gave money to party leader Muhammad Anwar and party Chief Altaf Hussain, and made billions of rupees in illegal contracts*". It

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followed the interrogation of two officials of Sui Southern Gas Company – Chief Finance Officer Amin Rajput and Deputy MD Shoab Warsi. A security official added:

“Recently, we brought back a target killer from Dubai who confessed killing workers of an American oil company in Karachi – the man belonged to the MQM. There are two MQMs – a criminal one and a political one; the political one must stay.”

Statistics taken from the Sindh Home Department [police and Rangers] proved that *19% of the suspects arrested during the Karachi operation were linked to the MQM; about 8% belonged to the ANP, 4% to the Sunni Tehrik, and 1% from the PPP.* The numbers could not be verified independently and the political parties usually distance themselves from suspected criminals. About *47% of the arrested suspects belonged to TTP* and associated groups.

Law Enforcement Agencies [LEAs] had just stepped up an operation against what they called MQM's militant wing before party leader Rashid Godil's attempted assassination.

“Party leaders [MQM] went into hiding as if they were criminals. There is a lot of resentment against the party leadership as well as law enforcement agencies equally.”

Pakistan Rangers conducted 5,785 operations since the beginning of the law-enforcement drive in Karachi since September 2013, in which 10,353 suspects had been arrested. At least 826 were classified as “terrorists”, 335 as “target killers”, and 296 were accused of “extortion”.

A senior anchor person Dr Shahid Masood had told in ARY's live TV show that Dr Asim was having a mega party scene at his home, a day before he was detained. Dr Asim was also playing as a bridge between the PPP and MQM; he had been accused of being MQM facilitator. His name had also surfaced in many cases of MQM and this was the prime reason of his arrest. Dr Asim, couple of days before his arrest, was present at former President Gen Musharraf's residence, too. He also bragged about him being ‘untouchable’ because of his connections at the ‘right places’.

Leader of Opposition in National Assembly Syed Khurshid Shah condemned the reported detention of Dr Asim Hussain and threatened that such measures could result in a disastrous outcome. PPP Vice President Sherry Rehman also addressed a press conference along with PPP Information Secretary Qamar Zaman Kaira and raised certain questions to how laws

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could be formulated against national politicians. *"We have given sacrifices in war against terrorism, how can anyone blame PPP for supporting terrorists?"* she said.

Syed Khurshid Shah, on the same day but separately, talked to the media and, amongst floating threats, roared: ' *General Sahib* [addressing Gen Raheel Sharif], *main kehta hoon nizam ko chalney dein....[I say the system should be allowed to continue....]*'

A very loud voice appeared from the media audience...and every one went silent including Syed Khurshid. The voice was:

'.....which nizam Shah sahib.... Loot khasoot ka, china cutting ka, nokarian bechney ka, qabza mafia ka, bhatta khori ka, jahalat ka, gunda gardi ka, ghost teachers ki tank-hawhein khaney ka, postings ki neelami ka, assemblion aur senate ki ticketein bechaney ka, commission khatay rahney ka, dollar Dubai bhijwate rahney ka.....'

[...which system Mr Shah....system of state level robberies, system of distributing state lands amongst relatives for free, system of selling employment letters, system of snatching open pieces of lands & properties on gun point, system of extortion huge money from businessmen, system of keeping people away from education, system of state sponsored terrorism, system of eating state budget through ghost teachers, system of selling attractive slots in state departments, system of selling election tickets for seats in Parliament and Senate [it is done in the name of party funds – but never audited], system of taking commission for state contracts, system of corruption and keep on sending dollars to Dubai.....]

Syed Khurshid's address of 26th August 2015 in the Parliament building is referred.

And the speaker was virtually dragged out of the conference room. After that truthful voice, Syed Khurshid could not concentrate on his address nor had he answered to any of the allegation pointing towards PPP's bad governance in Pakistan during 2008-13 and in Sindh during 2008-15 – all done in the name of democracy.

Pointing out to Asif Ali Zardari, CM Sindh Qaim Ali Shah stated:

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"Let us know if you want to declare the PPP a terrorist party and if that happens then there will be a war. We will defend the sanctity of Pakistan and will bear all sorts of allegations but not the allegation of terrorism."

"If the Rangers had any reservations about any of my cabinet members, they should have informed me first. We will talk to the federal government about such ad hoc raids."

Dr Asim was regarded as a close aide of former president Asif Ali Zardari. He was appointed federal petroleum minister during the Pakistan Peoples Party [PPP] government in 2008 and later made as head of the HEC's Sindh chapter since the PML[N]'s take over in Islamabad in May 2013.

On 27th August 2015; Dr Asim was presented in ATC-III by the Rangers who informed the court that Dr Asim had been placed under a 90-day preventive detention under the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997. The Rangers contended that they had credible information regarding Dr Asim's involvement in terrorism related activities as well as embezzlement of state funds to the tune of billions.

Three days after Dr Asim's arrest, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah expressed concern over the arrest of Dr Asim and lamented over the fact that he was not taken into confidence over the arrest. While talking to the media he said that:

".....this is not fair and it is unwarranted; it is not appropriate to arrest any individual at will, we do not practice the law of the jungle in Sindh."

The Chief Minister Shah had spoken to the Corps Commander and the DG Rangers Maj Gen Bilal Akbar, who told him there were serious complaints against the former petroleum minister. However, the CM held:

"But when they sent me the details of the complaints against Dr Asim I found them to be in general without solid substance. Sufficient evidence against Dr Asim does not exist; I should be made aware of arrests before they happen."

"His party is not content with the action taken against Dr Asim - they (PPP) hold me responsible because they elevated me to the position of chief minister."

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The CM Shah was of the view that he was in command of the security operation in Karachi, and hence should have been kept in the loop regarding all developments. *".....emphasising that being an elected chief minister and head of the provincial apex committee I must be consulted."*

While lodging a protest with the federal government, he termed Dr's arrest as *".....invasion by FIA and NAB on Sindh. Why is Sindh alone being targeted in the current anti-corruption drive?"*

In the court record, the Rangers had contended that they kept credible information regarding Dr Asim's involvement in terrorism related activities as well as embezzlement of funds. Perhaps, Dr Asim was being grilled for his alleged involvement in illegal occupation of government land in North Nazimabad and Clifton for the extension of his Dr Ziauddin Hospital.

Dr Asim's arrest came in what was described as the first major action against the PPP leadership during 2015's Karachi operation. He was a close aide to former president Asif Ali Zardari. In 2009, he was elected Senator from Sindh on a PPP ticket. He served as the minister of petroleum and natural resources and then the prime minister's adviser with the same portfolio until 2012. After the 2013 general elections, the PPP government in Sindh made him Chairman of the provincial HEC.

He was also believed to be close to MQM's Chief Altaf Hussain.

The Chief Minister then discussed the issue with Interior Minister Ch Nisar Ali and then with PM Nawaz Sharif twice. The CM told the media:

"The prime minister told me he was not aware of their actions and had assured our grievances will be redressed but despite that raids on Civic Centre are continuing."

Dr Asim has been involved, according to the allegations, in corruption amounting to more than four hundred billion rupees. In his statements to Rangers he made confessions of his involvement in multiple high-profile corruption scams and revealed secrets about the murder of Benazir Bhutto and Lyari gang-war in Karachi.

Just on the very next day, one Dr Yusuaf Sattar, the Deputy MD of Dr Asim's Ziauddin Hospital was picked up by another contingent of FIA officials and taken to unknown place for interrogation; of course without informing the CM Qaim Ali Shah.

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A petition was filed in the Sindh High Court on 27th August challenging the arrest of Dr Asim Hussain. The petition was filed by Dr Asim's mother Aijaz Fatima and Advocate Maulvi Iqbal Haider who contended that the former federal minister was an esteemed politician and his detention was unlawful as he didn't have a criminal record. The major point she emphasized that:

'.....her son is not involved in any criminal activity and also that her son will cooperate with the authorities in any case during interrogation and investigation etc.'

The petitioners asked for the court order for Dr Asim to be released. The federal and Sindh governments, the National Accountability Bureau [NAB] and the FIA were made party in the petition. The Sindh High Court adjourned hearing of petition against Dr Asim Hussain's arrest till September.

Meanwhile, Dr Zareen, Dr Asim's wife, wrote a letter to Inspector General of Police [IGP] Sindh that her husband had been suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure. She asked for permission to be allowed to meet Dr Asim in order to monitor his condition. After knowledge of his ill health, the Rangers authorities performed a complete medical check on Dr Asim stating him as medically fit then. They informed that his sugar levels were checked and there was no need to shift him to a hospital as he was completely fit as per Specialist Doctor's reports.

CHARGES ADMITTED BY DR ASIM:

Referring to 'the London Post' dated 31st August 2015:

".... Finally the heat reached at the door of one of the real 'mafia gangsters' of Pakistan. The arrest of Dr Asim Hussain has drawn unprecedented applause from a huge cross section of the people of Pakistan.....the people of Pakistan recognized corruption and terrorism equably damaging and destructive for the country.

This nexus between the two is at two levels i.e. either masses of dirty money gathered through plunder is directly invested in propping up terrorism to destabilize Pakistan, or massive corruption leads directly to injustice, bad governance, chaos, social breakdown, and insecurity. And this in turn creates recruits which feed the ranks of the terrorists."

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And this applause was directed specifically towards the Army, Gen Raheel Sharif, and other Army Generals, not towards the government. The great hope was that the said arrest would mark the start of an operation against the A team of bandits whose vanguard was comprised of politicians, bureaucracy, the police, and the judiciary. Once more, the people of Pakistan were seen standing so firmly behind their army.

PPP's Senator Saeed Ghani said that; *'the evidences of terror funding by Dr Asim should be made known after which we will have no basis to protest'*. He pointed out that politics of reconciliation did not mean just a policy of mutual understanding (*muk muka*). We also ensured that no harm was done to the democratic system during the '*dharnas*'.

Senator Saeed Ghani urged it was unbelievable that Dr Asim Hussain would ask any ambulance driver to transfer weapons in the vehicle. The PML[N]'s Federal Minister Gen (rtd) Abdul Qadir Baloch asserted that the Operation in Karachi would continue.

In its first official and detailed report on the high-profile interrogation of Dr Asim since his arrest on 26th August 2015, the Sindh Rangers had come up with astonishing figures of corruption with hundreds of billions pocketed by him and his bosses and associates; political and bureaucrats respectively.

The 12-page report, officially sent to the National Accountability Bureau [NAB] for further investigation and action, listed details of how the PPP leader took kickbacks from whom and in what amounts. NAB had already formed a Joint Investigation Team [JIT] with Rangers to further probe these specific charges and the NAB Chairman Ch Qamar Zaman had already received briefings from high ups and made out plans to proceed further.

A copy of the Rangers' confidential report, available with *The News*, confirmed almost all the charges of astronomical loot and plunder that was so far heard only on the media. The covering letter of the Rangers report, sent to the NAB on 9th September 2015, described Dr Asim's *"mighty illegal benefits which magnified his financial stature and social standing equating him to be indispensable."*

Five other officials of the Sui Gas companies and Petroleum Ministry, who were also arrested and interrogated, gave explicit details of how Dr Asim had collected billions upon billions in kickbacks from companies, even those which were known friends of Asif Ali Zardari. They included Zuhair Siddiqui (ex-Managing Director SSGC), Shoaib Warsi (Deputy MD SSGC), Amin Rajput (Chief Financial Officer SSGC), Fayyaz Merchant (Sr GM SSGC) and Kamran Ehsan Nagi (GM SSGC).

Referring to Shaheen Sehbai's description appeared in 'the News' dated 24th September 2015, the report stated:

"Dr Asim has been found involved in various acts of corruption, corrupt practices and misuse of authority as public office holder... He is responsible for inflicting losses to the tune of billions of rupees on the national exchequer..."

Huge amounts so embezzled were provided to his political masters [including Mr Zardari], which were subsequently used in terror financing and funding target killers.

The following are the specific cases:

■ *Dr Asim gave favours and illegal gas connections to KESC, which was owned by Abraaj Group with links to Asif Zardari and Faryal Talpur to the tune of Rs:100 billion.*

■

--- Zuhair Siddiqui admitted that he had paid Rs:6-7 billion to Dr Asim collected after illegal gas connections were given to companies including KESC which was allowed to keep Rs:62 billion in unpaid gas receivables.

■

--- He revealed [as per Page-10, para 3 of the Rangers report], that Dr Asim directed him as MD SSGC to grant liberty to Omni Group of Anwar Majeed, a friend of Asif Zardari, to allow enhanced loads of gas to captive power plants and sugar mills of Asif Zardari through Omni Group, thereby causing loss of billions to the national exchequer.

■

--- Dr Asim allowed uninterrupted gas supply to selected textile mills of APTMA and captive power plants and collected Rs:150 to 200 million per day as kickbacks.

■

--- Zuhair Siddiqui revealed that a Turkish global company paid US\$40-50 million to Dr Asim for prequalification as an exporter of LNG gas; Siddiqui himself got \$0.25 million as kickback.

--- Para 8 on Page 10 of the report reveals that Dr Asim received daily kickback of Rs:2 billion from PSO, through Shah, a Deputy MD PSO, and Jaffery, a GM, whose brother is a close friend of Asif Zardari.



— Dr Asim received Rs:1 billion as kickback from Abbas and Khalid Steel Mills for supplying them gas on special terms.”

Dozens of similar details of what amounts were taken in land deals with Manzur Kaka, the building authority official who later escaped from Pakistan, PMDC issues and oil kickbacks, were also revealed in the report. These specific charges were investigated in detail by the JIT of Rangers and NAB and references were sent to the respective court. All involved were placed on the ECL; thus they could not leave the country.

There was no mention in the report how these huge amounts were transferred overseas or whether this money was still in the Pakistani banks.

On 28th October 2015; the Supreme Court rejected an appeal by Dr Asim Hussain seeking his transfer to a hospital from the detention centre where he was being kept in Rangers custody for his alleged involvement in corruption cases. A two-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Sarmad Jalal Usmani, was hearing a petition filed by the family members of Dr Asim against his discharge and transfer from the government hospital.

At the last hearing on 9th October, the apex court had ordered the constitution of an impartial medical board for the check-up of the former petroleum minister and submission of its report within two weeks. Hearing the case today, Justice Saqib Nisar remarked that there was no need to keep Dr Asim in the hospital after a satisfactory report by the medical board.

The court rejected the complainant's appeal, and ruled in favour of the earlier order by the Sindh High Court.

On 26th November 2015; the Anti-Terrorism Court [ATC] remanded Dr Asim Hussain, in police custody for four days in a case relating to providing treatment and shelter to terrorists.

Following the end of his 90-day preventive detention, Rangers had handed Dr Asim over to police after lodging a case against him for allegedly treating and harbouring terrorists at North Nazimabad and Clifton branches of his hospital at the behest of leaders of the MQM and PPP.

Prosecutor General of Sindh Shahadat Awan sought four days' custody of the accused for questioning, collection of evidence and recording state-

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ments of witnesses before a magistrate. Usually, a regular prosecutor appointed for the administrative court if police pleads for remand.

Special Public Prosecutor of Rangers Habib Ahmed raised objections over the appearance of the provincial prosecuting officer in the case and said that in fact he had been authorised to plead the case because the paramilitary force was a complainant in the case.

Mr Habib informed the court that he was seeking 14-day police remand of the suspect and it was also mentioned in the remand paper, but the investigating officer had altered 14 days with four before submitting it to the court. It was a clear manifestation that the Sindh police was 'properly briefed' by its PPP masters that every favour be extended to Dr Asim.

Referring to Section 21-E of ATA, Mr Habib said the minimum duration for first police remand was about two weeks. After hearing the arguments, ATC's administrative judge Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto handed over the suspect to police on a four-day physical remand.

The new FIR lodged on the complaint of Rangers, Superintendent Inayatullah Durrani stated that Dr Asim confessed before the JIT that he had provided treatment to terrorists backed by political parties and militant organisations at Ziauddin Hospital after they suffered injuries during shootouts with Rangers and police. He also sheltered them on the pretext of treatment. The PPP and MQM leaders were also named in the FIR for allegedly asking Dr Asim to treat and shelter the terrorists.

The said FIR also accused the former petroleum minister of making appointments in Pakistan State Oil and Sui Southern Gas Company and awarding contracts by accepting graft.

The case against him was registered at the North Nazimabad police station under sections 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence or giving false information to screen offender), 202 (intentional omission to give information of offence by person bound to inform), 216 (harbouring offender who has escaped from custody whose apprehension has been ordered), 216-A (penalty for harbouring robbers or dacoits), 409 (criminal breach of trust by public servant or banker, merchant or agent) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code, read with sections 21I (aid and abetment), 21J (harbouring any person who committed an offence under this act) and 7 (punishment for act of terrorism) of Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997.

In the said FIR, MQM leaders Waseem Akhtar, Rauf Siddiqui, Anis Qaimkhani, Saleem Shahzad and Qadir Patel of the PPP were also named in the

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FIR as they allegedly asked Dr Asim to provide treatment and shelter to alleged terrorists.

An ATC granted interim pre-arrest bail to MQM leader Rauf Siddiqui in the present case till 19th December. After getting protective bail from the high court, Mr Siddiqui turned up before the trial court and moved a pre-arrest bail application. The ATC-I judge, Bashir Ahmed Khoso, granted Siddiqui an interim bail against a surety bond of Rs:200,000 and issued notices to the IO and the prosecutor for the next date.

On 7th December 2015; however, denying all allegations against him, Dr Asim Hussain told the administrative judge of the ATC that he was being tortured to make a bogus confession.

Dr Asim was produced before Justice Naimatullah Phulpoto of the Sindh High Court [SHC] after the period of his second police remand completed. He was in police custody since 28th November and before that he spent three months in Rangers custody.

The new investigation officer [IO] of the case, DSP Altaf Hussain, sought another extension in his remand for further questioning and collection of evidence in a case relating to providing treatment and shelter to terrorists. The IO said that he took over the investigations only three days earlier.

When the judge asked Dr Asim whether he was subjected to maltreatment in custody?. Dr Asim, who did not speak in his previous two appearances, broke his silence and denied all the allegations against him and said: *"I am being tortured and pressurised to make a false confession."*

Referring to the statement of the Chief Operating Officer of his own Dr Ziauddin Hospital — recorded before a judicial magistrate, the former petroleum minister said that he was being framed merely on the statement of a Medical Superintendent.

Dr Asim alleged that his life was at stake and he was suffering from brain tumour and heart ailments, but he was not being allowed a proper treatment. He said that he was being victimised for some reasons that he could not describe.

Dr Asim's daughter, Dr Nida, also submitted a statement along with an affidavit in court stating that the life of her father was in danger. Defence counsel Amir Raza Naqvi opposed the remand request stating that his client

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had already spent over 100 days in custody and it would be a sheer violation of Article 10 of the Constitution.

The counsel submitted that the NAB had shown the suspect arrested and sought his custody on the last hearing without authority. However, NAB counsel Amjad Ali Shah argued that NAB had only shown the suspect arrested, but did not get his custody. Mr Shah maintained that NAB was authorised by the competent authority to arrest Dr Asim.

After hearing all sides, Justice Phulpoto extended the police remand of the suspect till 12th December 2015.

FULL DETAILS OF JIT REPORT:

On 7th January 2016; PML[N]'s Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that:

'...no proof of corruption had been found against Dr Asim Hussain in the Ministry's files and that the Ministry had not even been consulted before his arrest'.

However, the NAB had filed an inquiry report with that Accountability Court on 23rd February 2016 against Dr Asim, charging him of causing losses of above said amount to the national exchequer through corruption, money laundering, and illegal allotment of land and grabbing of commission.

Talking to a private TV channel, PML[N] Minister Khaqan Abbasi advised not to level any allegations against Dr Asim without evidence or proof. The federal minister was perhaps instructed from the PM Nawaz Sharif to go with the said stance because of 're-conciliation and friendly opposition policy' settled between Mr Zardari and Nawaz Sharif.

However, Abbasi admitted that the Rangers made contact with Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited [SNGPL] and Sui Southern Gas Pipelines Limited [SSGPL] prior to the arrest of Dr Asim and it was the responsibility of the two to provide evidence to the organisations involved in the investigation.

The Richest Man of The World [?]; as per column of *GEO's Mazhar Abbas* appeared in media on 2nd March 2016;

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"A Joint Interrogation Team [JIT] declared Dr Asim Hussain 'the richest man in the world' in its report, a charge which seems far-fetched even if he allegedly has an \$88 billion market cap. Is he really richer than Bill Gates?"

"During Dr Asim's 90-day ordeal of intense interrogation, he was also asked about his alleged meeting with former RAW chief in India; where and when – not detailed."

PPP leader Aitzaz Ahsan once refused to defend Dr Asim over corruption allegations but condemned his trial under Anti-Terrorism Act. However, despite instructions from Mr Zardari, that at least two PPP leaders must ensure their presence in the court whenever Asim would be produced, hardly any prominent leader except Senator Saeed Ghani visited him.

Dr Asim's reply was in "no" when asked about the Sindh government cooperation and support; he was pushed in that condition because of some of the top notch "friends" from the PPP, Mr Zardari not excluded.

Surprisingly, he was allowed to transfer his assets to his son's name, who was settled in Canada then, in the last week of February 2016 while a high profile case of corruption was underway. No one knew how much assets were transferred on the files he had signed for his son.

The JIT Report revealed Dr Asim owned properties, business, and kept over 36 companies abroad including UAE, Kuwait, the US, the UK, Oman, Qatar, besides allegedly taking kick-backs and commission. He was also accused of terror financing, money-laundering, and facilitating terrorists of the MQM and Lyari gangs.

Dr Asim disclosed about 207 Cash Transactions Report [CTRs] and one Suspicious Transaction Report [STR], raised by different banks and reported to Financial Monitoring Unit [FMU], according to the JIT.

Dr Asim has been accused of involvement in huge illegal lands allotment, which he *was supposed to use for a charity trust and a cancer hospital: a plot of 2.8 acres in Clifton, one in KDA, and 1,347 sq yards in North Nazimabad.*

Although there was no mention of Asim's alleged link with Indian RAW, but the former adviser of the Sindh government disclosed before GEO's columnist that the first three questions, which the JIT asked Dr Asim were:

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1. *Do you know the RAW chief and did you meet him in Delhi? I said no and never.*
2. *Do you also own a hospital in Bhopal? I said why should I have hospital in Bhopal?*
3. *Have you met the US ambassador to India during your visit to Delhi? I said no,"*

However, Dr Asim categorically denied he has ever been *"physically tortured"* and added that:

- *"No, I was not physically hurt and during the 90-days remand I was only interrogated for 17 days, from five minutes to six hours.*
-
- *I was treated well and given a comfortable air-conditioned room, but faced tough questions during video recordings.*
-
- *Most of the questions related to corruption, property, but they did ask about giving treatment to MQM and Lyari gang-war terrorists also.*
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- *They were four to five people during interrogation. JIT comprising representatives of ISI, MI, IB, Special Branch and two from Rangers."*

The fact remained that all the JIT members had unanimously declared him as *'Jet Black' - meaning most dangerous category.*

As per JIT's findings, the accused disclosed positive indications about:

-involvement in harbouring / facilitating the target killers of the MQM and other banned organisations through providing medical facilities in his Ziauddin Hospital,
-
-involvement in money laundering,
-
-involvement in illegal appointments, promotions, recruitment, implementation of arbitrary decisions, illegal contracts in SSGC / PSO and others after receiving huge kickbacks,
-
-involvement in illegal registration of medical college and misuse of funds in PMDC,
-

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-involvement in embezzlement of State Lands obtained in the name of CHARITY and getting the same in personal name.

Dr Asim was only once asked about his relation with Asif Ali Zardari:

"I was once advised by a senior interrogator to name Asif and I will get the relief. I declined his offer on the pretext that there is nothing between us except close friendship."

But, the JIT revealed in their write-up that:

"....he [Dr Asim] has never actively participated in political activities but remained his supporter since his [Zardari's] school days. He was appointed federal minister in 2011-13, which provided him the opportunity to expand his political influence as petroleum minister to undertake massive collaborative corruption for personal goals."

Yes, Asif is my old friend but he was not my classmate at Petaro. I was not there when he led the protest against the then principal. Dr Zulfiqar Mirza and Abbas Rizvi were closer to him. Asif quit Petaro in class VIII, but he [Dr Asim] joined later. After school I met Asif, after a very long time, in Karachi."

The JIT revealed that on the instructions of Asif Zardari, Dr Zulfiqar Mirza, Qadir Patel and Muzzafar Tappi looked after issues of Lyari gangs and weapons supply. Accused Dr Asim also had good relations with top MQM leaders including Altaf Hussain, Dr Farooq Sattar, Nadeem Nusrat, Haider Abbas Rizvi, Waseem Akhtar and Mustafa Azizabadi.

Mazhar Abbas correctly opined that Dr Asim would defend his own cases from money laundering to facilitating terrorists, but the NAB and Rangers' prosecution got a huge task ahead to prove one of the biggest cases of corruption. *How could a man from a middle class family become the 'richest man in the world'? How they would prove it?*

On 6th May 2016; an Accountability Court [AC] indicted former federal minister Dr Asim Hussain, ex-Petroleum Secretary Ejaz Chaudhry and others in an over Rs:460 billion corruption reference.

Dr Asim, along with his accomplices, were charged for misusing his authority for getting plots allotted fraudulently and encroaching upon state land for expansion of Dr Ziauddin Hospital / Trust, money laundering, illegal gains, kickbacks, commission through fertiliser cartel for illegal curtailment

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of gas for exploitative price hike and defrauding people in the name of charity hospital.

The Court read out the charges against Dr Asim, Ejaz Chaudhry, former Chief Executive Officer [CEO] of the Karachi Dock Labour Board [KDLB] Safdar Hussain and former Director of the Karachi Development Authority [KDA] Syed Athar Hussain. However, they all pleaded not guilty and opted to contest the charges.

A terrorism case had already been lodged in North Nazimabad Police Station against Dr Asim in November 2015. Judge Saad Qureshi directed prosecution witnesses to record their evidence on 14th May onwards.

Abdul Hameed, group finance adviser and now administrator of Ziauddin Medical Centre, Dubai, and Masood Haider Jaffri, a former KDA director, were absconding. They had been accused of facilitating Dr Asim.

The National Accountability Bureau [NAB] had filed the reference against Dr Asim in February, alleging that the former petroleum minister had deprived the state of Rs:462.5bn between 2010 and 2013 — Rs:450bn through the fertiliser scam, Rs:9.5bn through land-grabbing fraud and Rs:3bn through money laundering.

According to the reference, Dr Asim approved summaries for unjustifiable and arbitrary gas curtailment in the name of load management. Ejaz Chaudhry allegedly facilitated the former minister by moving the summaries without considering rational approach.

The former Secretary Ch Ejaz, it was alleged, had also failed to implement a June 2011 decision of the Economic Coordination Committee [ECC] of the cabinet for providing 80 percent gas supply to fertiliser companies.

The NAB alleged that Safdar Hussain was involved in illegal extension and award of KDLB contract in violation of Public Procurement Regulatory Authority rules and facilitated Dr Asim to take over the KDLB hospital and misuse it for private practices and referral facility.

Safdar Hussain also allowed the former petroleum minister to use KDLB premises for nursing accommodation and after retirement he joined Ziauddin Hospital as General Manager human resources, it maintained.

NAB also alleged that the two former directors of the KDA had granted illegal lease of two acres KDA land in North Nazimabad and 2.8 acres in Clifton

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in favour of Dr Asim. The former minister had also illegally and fraudulently got more plots allotted for cancer hospital, medical university and other educational purposes.

The reference said Dr Asim got Dr Ziauddin Hospital Trust registered in 1981 and although the stated objective was charity, he never adhered to it and instead used it for commercial purposes in violation of the Trust Act, 1982. Dr Asim used the charity hospital as a vehicle of manipulation, money laundering, accumulation of wealth and assets, fraudulently got the land allotted for trust hospital and received grants from government / public functionaries.

The registration of the trust was also illegal as it was required to be enlisted with the Income Tax department [FBR] under section 42 of ITO 2002, it alleged.

GAS FIELDS: The NAB also filed another reference of over Rs:17bn against Dr Asim, Sui Southern Gas Company's MD Khalid Rehman and some former senior officials of the utility and the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited for allegedly misusing their authority and fraudulently awarding contracts of five gas fields to Jamshoro Joint Venture Limited.

Dr Asim Hussain, and other alleged corrupt officials, pleaded not guilty to the accusations. Secretary Petroleum Ch Ijaz was also present at the hearing. While responding to court's question, Dr Asim alleged that:

'National Accountability Bureau [NAB] was submitting fake documents in the case against him. Islamabad High Court [IHC] has already concluded the case.'

While talking to the media before the hearing, Dr Asim said that he was given 13 books by the NAB while 12 of those were about metre reading. He mocked the alleged fake case against him saying that the bureau would also make him face a bogus case for stealing someone's cattle.

The prosecution held that Dr Asim had misused his authority as a federal minister, in collusion of other accused; illegally curtailed gas to the agriculture sector to benefit a particular group linked with the fertilizer industry.

In February 2016, the Accountability Court, while hearing a corruption case against Dr Asim, had sent him to prison to seek the complete investigation report to reach a just conclusion.

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On 14th June 2016; a video clip of Dr Asim emerged in which he had levelled serious allegations against PPP's Owais Muzaffar Tappi, accusing him of being involved in "every kind of corruption". It was probably filmed during the course of his interrogation. Dr Asim claimed that Owais Muzaffar was raised by PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari's mother. He added that:

"Owais Muzaffar was involved everywhere where there was corruption. He was the Chief Minister of Sindh even when he wasn't.

..... that Owais Muzaffar was involved in corruption pertaining to lands and the purchase of medicines. A doctor told me a vaccine cost Rs:600 and was purchased at Rs:1000; when I investigated the matter, it turned out that the doctor was right."

....that he had brought the matter into the notice of President Zardari. When Owais Muzaffar came to know about this, he threatened me. He told me he would 'give me an injection' that I would remember for a long time."

But Dr Asim could not get any relief and remained in NAB's custody being allegedly involved in corruption cases of Rs:462 billion amidst other charges.

On 5th December 2016; Sindh High Court [SHC] issued notice to prosecutor NAB over the plea regarding immediate hearing of Dr Asim corruption case. During the hearing of Dr Asim case pertaining to Rs:17 billion corruption, the defence lawyer said that his client was seriously ill therefore; his bail should be granted.

The court remarked that *'the bail cannot be approved without hearing the stance of NAB'*. The judge while accepting the plea to conduct immediate hearing of Dr Asim's case adjourned the proceedings.