

Staff Reporter

All the accused in the much-talked-about Padma Bridge graft case were cleared from the charge as the Anti Corruption Commission's investigation did not find any evidence of 'corruption conspiracy' in hiring consultant for the Padma Bridge Project.

"The ACC investigation team submitted its report on Padma Bridge graft case to the Commission. No one is found guilty of anything wrong during the investigation. So, the Commission today gives its approval to the final report," ACC chairman M Badiuzzman told a press briefing at the ACC conference room yesterday.

He said the ACC earlier carried out an inquiry into the corruption allegation in the Padma Bridge project and it wanted to submit the final report in 2012 as there was lack of adequate evidence. But it did not submit it since there was a request from the World Bank to continue the inquiry, he said.

"As per the World Bank's request, we had formed a probe team...the team held a series of meetings with the Bank's delegations and they made their suggestions," the ACC chairman said.

He said the ACC filed a case of 'corruption conspiracy' in December 2012 based on prima facie evidence. "We had hoped we would get more information during the investigation. The investigation team also went to Canada to collect evidence over the Padma Bridge graft case. And it collected some documents, too."

After examining all the documents, Badiuzzman said the ACC investigation did not find anyone's involvement in the corruption conspiracy in the bridge project and submitted its report to the Commission saying that it as the final report, and recommended not to make any charge-sheet.

The anti-graft body filed the case on December 17, 2012 against seven people for their alleged involvement in the Padma Bridge project graft dropping the names of key suspects former Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain and former State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury.

The accused in the Padma bridge graft case were former secretary of Bridge Division Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan (now member of the Privatization Board), superintendent engineer (river control) of Bangladesh Bridge Authority Kazi M Ferdous, executing engineer (bridge construction and maintenance) of Roads and Highways Department M Riaz Ahmed Zaber, deputy managing director of Engineer and Planning Consultant Limited Mohammad Mustafa, former director (international project division) of SNC Lavalin Inc Mohammad Ismail, former vice president (international project division) of SNC Lavalin Ramesh Shah and former vice-president of SNC Lavalin Kevin Wallace.

Reply to a question, ACC commissioner M Shahabuddin said the ACC completed its investigation into the Padma bridge graft case duly, legally and based on facts. "Our investigation didn't found any corruption conspiracy in hiring consultant for the bridge project."

A case over the Padma bridge graft is under trial in the Canadian court where Ramesh Shah, a Bangladeshi origin Canadian national, is facing trial. Ramesh Shah reportedly mentioned in his diary that four percent of commission would be given to former Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain in hiring consultant for the giant the bridge project.

Describing fundamental differences between the Canadian trial and trial of Bangladesh in the bridge graft case, Shahabuddin said, "There was no existence of diary. We knew about the

'notepad' from the Canadian court hearing.”

Reply to another query, he said, “To be honest, we didn't get any information from the World Bank although it had earlier assured us of providing adequate information. Something (WB's ill intention to cut its funding in the bridge project) was there.”

ACC Commissioner Nasiruddin Ahmed was present at the press briefing.