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Obama envoy wanted by Lucknow police

Pervez Iqbal Siddiqui, TNN 8 November 2009, 03:56am IST

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LUCKNOW: An Obama diplomat is wanted by the Lucknow police. Presently enjoying the status of an ambassador by virtue of representing the US in the United Nations Management and Reforms Committee (UNMRC), Jide Zeitlin was slapped with criminal charges like cheating and dishonestly, including delivery of property and criminal breach of trust, in case crime number 743/08 lodged with the Aliganj police station here in 2008 end.



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The criminal case has been lodged under Section 406 and 420 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) by a group of 16 telecom sector contractors based in Lucknow accusing IMI of not clearing their outstanding dues worth an estimated Rs 4.5 crore (Almost a million US dollars). Apart from IMI chairman Jide Zeitlin, the FIR also names Nakul Wafna of Mumbai, Rishad Currimjee and Amitabh Srivastava as having represented IMI in different capacities.

Additional director general of police (ADG) Law & Order (II) AK Jain confirmed that the case was lodged on December 29, 2008, with the Aliganj police.

"Since the amount involved in the case is running into crores of rupees, Lucknow police have recently recommended transfer of the probe to the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Uttar Pradesh Police, the ADG said.

Interestingly, the Delhi High Court recently appointed an arbitrator to dissolve the assets of IMI and pay dues worth Rs 7.17 crore to Unitech Power Transmissions (UPT) which had executed contracts for IMI but their dues were not being cleared by the latter despite several assurances reminders and assurances.


If complainants of the FIR in Lucknow are to be believed, IMI had awarded contracts in 10 telecom circles of the country including Haryana, UP East, UP West, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orrisa, Gujrat, Chennai and Tamil Nadu. "In almost each of the circles, there are at least 10 contractors who dues outstanding on IMI," says Qausar Shoib, one of the victim contractors at Lucknow.

"It was Jide Zeitlin's visit to Lucknow in January 2008 that left everyone quite impressed. His Harvard education and association with financial institutions of inter-national repute left no scope for suspicion. You can say that we were virtually spellbound till we realised what has happened to us," said Qausar talking to TOI.

As per the FIR in Lucknow, the complainants were issued work orders in March 2008 for contracts of different works related to installation of cellphone towers like construction of tower base, installation of tower, its electrification and likes. As per the work order, a copy of which has been provided to the police, the contractors were to receive 40 per cent of the contract value at the time completing the execution of the job and another 50 per cent within the next 30 days. The remaining 10 per cent was to be settled later on.

Allegations are that even after 10 months of their contract job being executed in full, the IMI was yet to clear outstanding dues that should have been paid within 30 days of the work order being executed. The FIR, lodged by Bhupak Singh, a partner in Satakshi Contractors (Allahabad) on behalf of the 16 contractors, states that all out efforts to trace and contact the authorities of IMI named above have proved futile. The outstanding dues on IMI were causing heavy financial losses as it has blocked liquid capital of the contract companies which were issued the work orders.

Having worked with Goldman Sachs since 1983, and elected as a partner of the investment banking business in 1996, Zeitlin was serving the organisation as COO when he called it quits to set up Independent Mobile

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Infrastructures (IMI) (Private) Limited in 2005.

In its foreign direct investment application, cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on January 18, 2007, IMI proposed to invest Rs 3,000 crore in the telecom infrastructure sector in India.

As a result, the company came up with its offices in different states and floated the concept of owning mobile phone network towers and letting them out to telecom operators on rent.

Presently, the telecom operators have installed their own towers and have a proper department for their regular upkeep.

The IMI concept entered the telecom market as a promising venture which offered the telecom operators to do away with the trouble of maintenance of network towers and instead use professionally managed options for a premium.

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