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Pajhwok

Second VP, ministers accused of embezzling a million dollars

By Khwaja Basir Ahmad

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Hajj and Auqaf ministry's cashier has accused second vice president and seven ministers of embezzling one million of dollars during last year's Haj ritual.

Haji Mohammad Noor, who was arrested seven months back with \$3, 62,000 at Kabul airport on his way back home from Saudi Arabia, told an open hearing of Criminal Justice task Force (CJTF) of the Counter-narcotics Ministry on Monday the second VP Karim Khalili and the ministers were the real culprits behind the fraud.

Intelligence officials had accused the cashier of being involved in the embezzlement of money taken from 23 travel agencies during last year's Haj rite and that he transferred the money secretly to the country.

However, during his hearing, Noor said, "I have nothing to do with this as I am just a cashier. How can I be given bribe?" He said he was just following the orders for transferring the money.

He requested the court to arrest Khalili and the seven ministers, who he did not name. He said 23 private travel agencies and Haj operation commission embezzled the amount.

Khalili was part of the Haj Operation Commission which is supposed to ensure a safe travel to and from Saudi Arabia of Afghan pilgrims.

Prosecutors Ibrahim Ghafari and Ahmad Rashid Totakhel who filed the case against Noor Mohammad said Noor facilitated the deal between the then Haj and Auqaf minister, Siddiq Chakari, and the private travel agencies both in Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia.

They also accused Noor of receiving \$150 from each pilgrim in Afghanistan by illegally enrolling them in traveling list and providing them accommodation in Saudi Arabia.

Of the total embezzled amount through this process, the prosecutors said, \$500,000 went to Chakari and 362,000 pocketed by Mohammad Noor.

Noor agreed with the prosecutors, but said he did this on the behest of Chakari. He said he had to obey his orders as his subordinate.

About the 25 million afghanis embezzled amount, Noor said he withdrew it from the Da Afghanistan Bank (central bank) on the behest of Chakari for accommodating Afghan pilgrims in Saudi Arabia. He said only five million afghanis were spent there and when was bringing back the remaining money from Saudi Arabia, he was arrested at the Kabul Airport. He said Chakari ordered him to bring back the money to Afghanistan.

He said he told Chakari that he could not transfer such a big amount of money to the country but he said there would be no problem.

Siddiq Chakari is currently in London, England who has been formally indicted by Afghan Attorney General Office (AGO). The AGO asked Interpol officially to arrest Chakari and extradite him to Afghanistan, but no one knows what happened to him.