

Pak businessman held on defective warrant, UK court told

Page No.02 Col No.03

LONDON: The Westminster Magistrates' Court has been told that the Karachi businessman was arrested in London on the basis of a defective warrant by the Scotland Yard on the request of the American government.

The Scotland Yard arrested Pakistani businessman Jabir Siddiq on the extradition request filed by the American government in relation to allegations of conspiracy to commit blackmail, import class-A drugs and money laundering in the USA.

On Tuesday, Jabir Siddiq's lawyer Toby Cadman told the district judge that the first warrant upon which Mr Siddiq was arrested was defective and would be taken up during the extradition hearing at a large stage in the proceedings.

Jabir Siddiqi appeared before the district judge via video link from Wandsworth Prison for the third hearing in the extradition request from the USA. His counsel, Toby Cadman noted that the extradition request was in the name of Jabir Motiwala, a name that Mr Siddiq has never used. He requested the judge to get the issue of surname corrected in the records.

The district judge directed the Crown Prosecution Services (CPS) to make enquiries with the US government in this regard. The matter was adjourned for about a month although Mr Cadman noted at the hearing that a further bail application would be made in due course.

Jabir Siddiq appeared from the Wandsworth Prison and spoke only to confirm his name and date of birth. He looked calm and composed. His solicitor and two friends also attended the court in support along with Indian and Pakistani media.

Jabir Siddiq – who has been referred as Jabir Motiwala in media reports initially - was arrested by the Metropolitan Police's Extradition Unit during a dawn raid from the Hilton Hotel near Edgware Road in the early hours of Friday August 17. The police said that the arrest warrant had been issued by the Westminster Magistrates' Court.

Two days after his arrest, the businessman was presented before the judge at the Westminster Magistrates' Court where the bail was refused by District Judge Margot Coleman who said she was not persuaded to grant him bail as he could flee the country or commit further offences.

Leanna Bezzant, representing the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), read out the charges, which carry a prison sentence of 25 years, against the Pakistani national. The CPS, acting on behalf of the US authorities, linked Jabir Motiwala with Dawood Ibrahim and his alleged network.

She told the judge: “He is a senior member of the D-Company, a Pakistan organised criminal network, that is involved in terrorism, drug trafficking, weapon trafficking, money laundering and extortion. Since 2012 the FBI have been investigating D-Company and its members and associates. The leader resides in Pakistan and its smuggling routes go through South Asia, the Middle East and Africa. Jabir Motiwala is one of the top lieutenants in it. It is based in Karachi.”

Toby Cadman told the court during the hearing that although the allegations are very serious, there was no evidence before the court at this stage and that this should be approached with some caution. He noted that there is the presumption of innocence and a presumption in favour of bail. Mr Cadman confirmed at the hearing that his client strongly denied the allegations in their entirety and denied any involvement with any organised crime or terrorist organisation.

It was argued on his behalf that he is a successful businessman in Pakistan and was in the UK on a 10-year visa and has visited the US previously. Mr Cadman confirmed that his client was a man of good character and had never been arrested in any jurisdiction.