

16 cases against Zardari since Nov 1996

Staff Report

KARACHI: Asif Ali Zardari, who was granted bail in the last of the 16 cases registered against him, was taken into custody on Nov. 4, 1996, from the Governor's House in Lahore, just two days before the removal of his wife, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, by the then-president Farooq Khan Leghari.

Six criminal cases were registered against Mr Zardari, including conspiracy to kill his brother-in-law Murtaza Bhutto on Sept. 20, 1996, in a shootout. The case was being tried at the Central Prison Karachi. Mr Zardari was arrested in FIR No 2/97, registered under Section 403, 420 and 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code.

The case was registered on Feb. 16, 1997, by which time Mr Zardari was already in custody. A former high commissioner to the United Kingdom, Wajid Shamsul Hassan, and a deputy collector of customs, were the co-accused in a case in which Mr

Zardari was charged with sending some antiques out of the country.

The case is still pending before a federal anti-corruption judge in Karachi.

Mr Zardari was again shown to be involved in the murder of former irrigation secretary of Sindh, Alam Baloch, who had been killed on Sept. 18, 1997, when Mr Zardari had been confined at the Central Prison Karachi. The case is pending before a sessions court in Hyderabad.

Mr Zardari has filed an application for the transfer of his trial to Karachi. Another case was registered against Mr Zardari on Aug. 18, 1997, on the charges of receiving kickbacks/commissions in return for awarding a contract of the Karachi Electric Supply Corporation by influencing the board of directors. He was acquitted of the charges by a Sindh High Court bench. On Jan 12, 1999, Mr Zardari was declared to be involved in the murder of a former high court judge, Justice Nizam Ahmed,

brother-in-law of Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid, and his son Nadeed Ahmed in June 1996. The case is pending before a sessions court in Karachi.

Mr Zardari was involved in a narcotics case on Nov 19, 1997, based on a statement by Arif Baloch, alias Noori Teddy. The case, registered under the Narcotics Substances Act, is pending trial before court in Lahore. He was also booked in two attempted-suicide cases on May 16 and May 26, 1999, while he was confined at the CIA Centre in Karachi. He was acquitted in both cases.

Mr Zardari was booked in five Elitesab References in 1998. Two references, 26/98 and 27/98 in which Ms Bhutto was also a co-accused, were filed on the charges of owning assets beyond his known source of income. He was also booked in the Tractor Reference (Elitesab Reference 29/98) for receiving kickbacks for awarding a contract for the import of low-cost tractors for farmers from Poland.

Two references against Mr Zardari and Ms Bhutto (30/98 and 31/98) were registered on the charges of their receiving kickback for awarding two contracts of pre-shipment inspection of goods to two Swiss companies - Societe Generals de Suisse and Cotecru. The federal government is pursuing these charges in a court in Switzerland. Mr Zardari was also booked on the charges of receiving a commission from a former chairman of Pakistan Steel Mills for awarding various contracts. The reference, bearing No 32/98, is commonly known as the Steel Mills Case.

Mr Zardari and Ms Bhutto were also booked in the ARY Gold Reference for receiving commissions/kickbacks for giving permission to the ARY Group for the import of gold into Pakistan.

The case in which Mr Zardari was granted bail on Monday by the Supreme Court bench pertained to the import of a BMW vehicle for which Mr Zardari did not pay the duties.

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