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A policeman formally attached to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) told the Gampaha Magistrates Court today (4) that he was pressured by officers of the Colombo Crime Division (CCD) to falsely implicate former CID Director Shani Abeysekara.

Attorney-at-Law Chaminda Athukoorala, appearing for Sub-Inspector R.S.M. Mendis, told Magistrate Manjula Karunaratne yesterday that ASP Neville de Silva and an Inspector attached to the CCD had warned the former CID officer that he would be arrested unless he stated that Abeysekara had planted firearms at a house in Kalagedihena in order to falsely frame former DIG Vaas Gunawardena for murder. Mendis has refused to comply with the request of the CCD to make a false statement, Athukoorala said. After hearing the allegation, the Magistrate privately interviewed Mendis, and recorded a sworn statement from him about the alleged incident.

Mendis was produced before the Gampaha Magistrates Court yesterday after being arrested on Monday, August 3, on charges of planting false evidence during the CID investigation of the 2013 murder of businessman Mohamed Shiyam.

In May 2014, a CID team including then ASP Abeysekara and Sergeant Mendis reported to the Colombo Fort Magistrates Court that they had uncovered a stash of weapons hidden by former DIG Vaas Gunawardena. Two guards at Gunawardena's residence gave sworn statements to the magistrate that they had seen an aide of the former DIG, Nirosh Chaminda Villarachchi, removing the weapons from Gunawardena's home.

Villarachchi later gave a sworn statement to the CID that he was asked by Gunawardena to hide the weapons in the home of Priyantha Neligama, who also gave a sworn confession in 2014 corroborating the story. Police investigators also traced some of the weapons back to the Kurunegala police armoury, and convicted a police officer of illegally issuing two shotguns to Gunawardena. During his murder trial, Gunawardena gave a dock statement confessing that he owned the weapons and stating that he obtained them during combat operations against the LTTE.

However, in June 2020, the two guards, Neligama and Villarachchi all reversed their positions and claimed that Vaas Gunawardena had nothing to do with the weapons and that they were introduced to Neligama's house by Shani Abeysekara. They said that their previous sworn confessions were all compelled by Abeysekara. On this basis, CCD investigators last Friday arrested Abeysekara and charged him with falsifying evidence.

The case will be taken up again on Friday, August 7. **(Nirmala Kannangara)**

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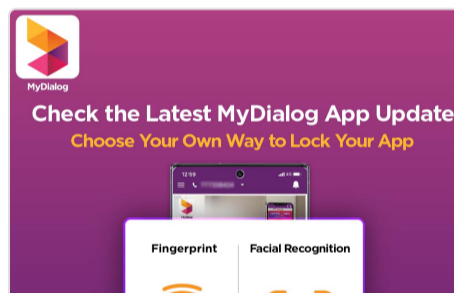
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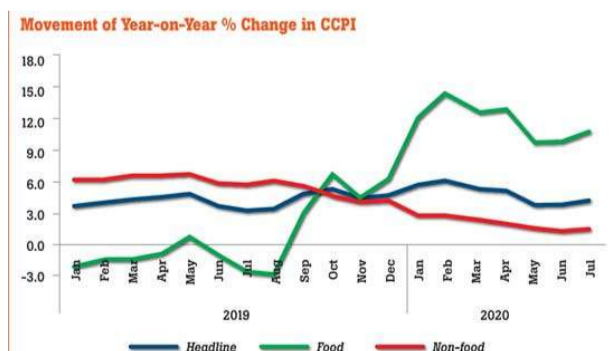
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