

Four on death row for killing Muhuri

Life imprisonment for four

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Chittagong

Four Islami Chhatra Shibir cadres were yesterday sentenced to death and four to life imprisonment for killing Principal Gopal Krishna Muhuri in Chittagong.

The Speedy Trial Tribunal found the rest of the 12 accused in the sensational murder case not guilty.

Of the four to die, Alamgir Kabir alias Baittya Alamgir and Taslimuddin Montu were present in the crowded courtroom when Judge M Hasan Imam delivered the verdict yesterday, 15 months after the killing. Gittu Nasir and Azam are absconding.

Also absconding are Shibir activist Habib Khan and Mohiuddin, who were sentenced to life in prison along with another Shibir cadre Chhota Saiful and Md Shahjahan, accountant of the Nazirhat College.

They have also been fined Tk 50,000 each. The judge ordered the

Chittagong deputy commissioner to realise the fines through attachment of the property of the accused.

Mohiuddin's brother and Shibir activist Nasir, who was believed to be the mastermind behind the killing, was found not guilty along with Tofazzal Ahmed, Idris Meah Chowdhury and Md Jahurul Haq, three teachers of the college.

The principal was gunned down with an AK-56 rifle at his Jamal Khan residence in the city on November 16 morning in 2001. He died on the spot as bullets blew up his skull. His killing was a sequel to a move by a vested quarter for his removal.

The four sentenced to death can appeal against the verdict within seven days of receipt of certified copies of the judgement.

The punishment of Gittu Nasir, Azam, Habib Khan and Mohiuddin will be effective from the date of their arrest or surrender, the judge said.

In a written reaction, Muhuri's

wife Uma said the verdict had ensured justice and was a good start towards establishment of rule of law.

She however urged for an appeal in the High Court against acquittal of four.

The judgement also mentioned how the killing was planned and done. It said there were civil suits against Muhuri, lodged by 15 people including the three college teachers.

Quoting evidences, it said, Habib Khan, Mohiuddin, Gittu Nasir, Chhota Saiful, Azam and Baittya Alamgir had a meeting atop a hill at the Chittagong University on November 10 in 2001 and finalised a plan to kill Muhuri on November 16.

As per the plan, Gittu Nasir, Chhota Saiful, Azam and Baittya Alamgir went to the residence of Taslimuddin Montu at Kapashgola at around 10:00pm on November 15

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Women and children display placards to denounce price hike of essentials at a rally at Muktagan organised by the 11-Party yesterday. The government recently increased fuel price that had a knock-on effect on transport fare and commodities. Utility prices have also been raised, making cost of living high.

PHOTO: STAR

No-man's land people 'vanish' into the blue

STAR REPORT

A group of 213 people stranded in the no-man's land for a week disappeared mysteriously in the early hours of yesterday, as New Delhi and Dhaka bickered over push-in of Bangla-speaking people.

Delhi said that the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) had accepted the people, many of them gypsies, a claim flatly denied by Dhaka.

With the disappearance of the people across Nazir Gomani of Lalmonirhat district, the tension reduced. But both the BDR and the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) were on high alert.

The BSF continued assembling people along the border to push them into Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan will soon fly to New Delhi to meet his counterpart Yashwant Sinha over the Indian move to deport the so-called "illegal immigrants". They talked over telephone Wednesday night to resolve the

issue.

The BDR may sit with the BSF in Coochbehar this morning to ease the border tension.

Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani said Bangladesh has taken back its nationals, thus defusing an "immediate crisis" that had threatened to snowball into a major row, AFP reported.

"However, the problem of illegal immigration remains which needs to be resolved," he was quoted by the Press Trust of India.

Foreign Secretary Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury however denied the claim and said Bangladesh did not receive them.

"We don't know where these (stranded) people have gone," said Chowdhury during a regular briefing here.

Shamsur repeated that India does not have any illegal Bangladeshi immigrants.

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Fuel price hike to stunt growth, warns MCCI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recent price hike of petroleum products may hinder economic growth, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) warned the government yesterday.

The price increase would have a ripple effect on the economy, eroding the competitive edge of export sectors like readymade garments, the MCCI said.

"The general feeling is that the government has increased prices to collect extra revenue," MCCI Vice-president Abdul Hafiz Choudhury

told State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharrar Hossain at his office.

"But such a step is highly questionable as it often turns counterproductive and reduces revenue collection from other sectors," he maintained.

The MCCI questioned the government's argument that domestic prices had to follow international market trends: it pointed out that a 6.8 per cent increase in world prices had been followed by a 13.7 per cent rise locally.

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Dhaka dismisses New Delhi's take-back claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka yesterday dismissed New Delhi's claim that Bangladesh had accepted 213 people stranded for a week in the no-man's land.

"We don't have any evidence about what Indian media claimed and there is no illegal Bangladeshi in India," Foreign Secretary Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury told newsmen at the weekly foreign ministry briefing.

Earlier in the day, Inspector General of the Border Security Force (BSF) KC Sharma told Indian media

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Eid now on Feb 12

BSS, Dhaka

The Eid-ul-Azha will be celebrated on February 12, instead of February 13.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee with Khatib of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque Moulana Obaidul Haque in the chair, a press release of the Islamic Foundation said.

JS won't discuss price hike, push-in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The House yesterday rejected 82 notices seeking discussions on the issues of public interest.

Opposition lawmakers submitted the notices proposing discussions on the issues ranging from price spiral of essentials to inclusion of Bangladesh in the US list of terror-risk countries.

They also included the issues of law and order deterioration, push-ins by India, oil price hike, repression on opposition workers defying court orders, custodial deaths during the army-led anticrime drive, indemnity ordinance and Union Parishad polls.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar said that there was no logical ground to hold discussions adjourning the

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Announcement

The Daily Star will publish an exclusive interview of Indian External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha by Mahfuz Anam in tomorrow's issue. The Prothom Alo will also carry the interview on the same day.