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7 JMB linchpins handed death in Jhalakathi

Families of slain judges demand quick execution of verdict; militant chief inquires about govt's punishment for 'engaging' them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Barisal court yesterday sentenced to death Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman, his second-in-command Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai and five other militants and acquitted one in the sensational Jhalakathi judges' killing case.

The others to walk the gallows are the banned JMB's Majlish-e-Shura members Ataur Rahman Sunny, Abdul Awal and Khaled Saifullah, suicide bomber Iftekhar



The two slain judges Sohel Ahmed and Jagannath Pandey (top). Rab men (right) escort JMB kingpins Abdur Rahman and Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai in bulletproof jackets and helmets to a Jhalakathi court yesterday.



Hasina demands punishment of attackers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday condemned the attack on journalists by the ruling BNP men directed by a local MP in Kushtia and demanded immediate punishment to the people responsible.

"The BNP-Jamaat alliance government has created anarchy in the country by torturing and harassing the journalists through their party cadres and the law enforcers since they took charge," Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League (AL), said in a statement.

Hasina also noted that some of the journalists of Kushtia were forced to leave their town due to the threats by the goons of the ruling party recently.

The opposition leader also said that the police attacked the journalists' protest rally without any

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Kushtia BNP cadres attack journos' meet

2 local lawmakers blamed for instigation; 25 injured

STAR REPORT

At least 25 journalists were injured, one critically, when BNP cadres swooped on a journalists' convention in Kushtia yesterday protesting against harassment of four journalists by ruling BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam.

The critically injured Mizanur Rahman Bhija, news editor of Kushtia-based Dainik Kushtia, was sent to Dhaka immediately for better treatment with injuries to the head and chest.

The other injured include the President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, BFUJ Treasurer Farazi Azmol Hossain, former vice-president of Dhaka

Union of Journalists (DUJ) Saiful Islam and General Secretary of DUJ Omar Faruk. Iqbal Sobhan also sustained injuries to the head and chest.

The BNP men attacked the convention 20 minutes after the programme began at 11:30am.

Witnesses said at least 100 cadres and activists equipped with weapons came out from BNP office chanting slogans against the journalists' convention. The venue of the convention, Kushtia Public Library ground, was only 300-yard away from the Kushtia district BNP office.

Sources said two ruling party lawmakers of Kushtia allegedly provided cadres to carry out the attack on the journalists in a bid to foil the convention. The BNP cadres started throw-

ing brickbats at the journalists, vandalised furniture of the convention, a motorcycle of photojournalist Jamil Hasan Khokon and two microbuses that carried the journalists from Dhaka and other places.

District Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) President Abdul Mueed Babul, General Secretary Kamal Uddin, Joint Secretary Pikel and Sumon, Kushtia Government College unit Convener Abdul Hakim, Joint Convener Abu Sayeed Jakaria Utpal, Mirpur upazila BNP leader Zillur Rahman, Tohirul Islam and district Jubo Dal leader Sahidullah Sahid led the attack on the convention.

They beat up the journalists. SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Demand for resignation political: CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz said yesterday the demand for his resignation by the opposition parties and the civil society is "political".

The CEC, who has always avoided journalists, suddenly invited reporters to a briefing at his office room yesterday but asked them not to put any "political question".

On the political parties' demand for his resignation he said, "It is their democratic right."

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ACC REJECTS PROPOSED ORGANOGRAM Government out to impose bureaucrats' control

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is all set to impose an organisational structure on the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in an apparent move to enable bureaucrats to control the 'independent' commission, sources said.

The ACC yesterday rejected the proposed organogram terming it illegal.

The Cabinet Division on Sunday unilaterally proposed the set-up

comprising 650 posts in 39 ranks, in which bureaucrats on deputation would hold all the high positions.

"This foils the very purpose of establishing an independent anti-graft body by abolishing the Bureau of Anti-Corruption that was controlled by the government," said an ACC source.

ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan said, "The proposed structure may hinder independent activities of the commission."

But the Cabinet Division framed

the proposal without the knowledge of the ACC and had it cleared by the establishment ministry and finance division.

Whether the ACC rejects it or not, the cabinet division will place the proposal before the National Implementation Committee on Administrative Reforms (Nicar), headed by the prime minister, for final approval. If Nicar approves it at a June 6 meeting, this organogram will be implemented

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Indonesian quake toll edges past 5,000

AP, Bantul

The death toll from a 6.3-magnitude earthquake in Indonesia rose by more than 800 yesterday to 5,137, according to the government. Meanwhile, emergency aid began arriving, but officials said the supplies were not reaching survivors quickly enough.

The government's Social Affairs Ministry said the revised death toll included previously uncounted bodies buried in mass graves

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PHOTO: STAR

Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, top, bleeds from the forehead after BNP cadres attack a journalists' convention in Kushtia yesterday. Journalists, right, try to protect themselves from the attack.



No more money whitening: Saifur

Next budget may put stop to other provisions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has said the next budget will not allow whitening of black money.

"The existing provision of whitening black money by paying 7.5 per cent tax will be nullified," he said at a pre-budget consultation meeting with the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) yesterday.

He said he is also thinking about repealing the other provisions of the existing system like purchasing cars, apartments and plots in metropolitan areas after paying a certain amount of tax. "I was not very much conversant, but it is a serious provision and I will look into this," he said.

Last year also Saifur opposed the provision of whitening black money, terming it "unethical", but later continued with it under pressures from the black money holders.

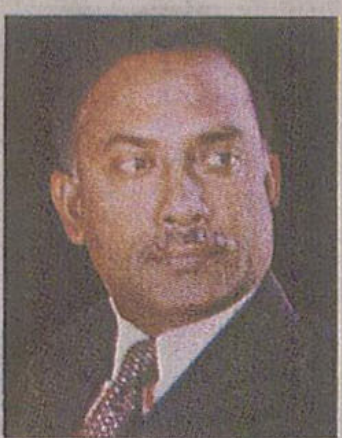
Giving his views on the current economic situation, next budget and its priority areas, he told the meeting at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium that withdrawal of 10 per cent tax on interest income from small deposits will be considered in the next budget.

Saifur, who is scheduled to place the national budget for fiscal 2006-07 in parliament on June 8, said the next budget will focus on pro-poor growth under the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

"Otherwise, the growth will not bring any benefit for the large number of poor people," he said, referring to the recent violence at garment factories.

Pointing at the fact that the garment owners are becoming richer while their workers are deprived of the basic needs, he

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Zia's death anniversary today

AGENCIES, Dhaka

The 25th death anniversary of president Ziaur Rahman, founder of the ruling BNP, will be observed across the country today.

On this day in 1981, Zia was assassinated by a group of disgruntled army personnel at Chittagong Circuit House.

Acting President Jamiruddin Sircar has paid rich tribute to the

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IMPORTED NEWSPRINT JS body asks govt for significant tax-cut

Suggests it to raise advertisement rate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday recommended to the government that it drastically reduces the present level of tax on imported newsprint and brings it to a reasonable level comparable to other Saarc countries.

The parliamentary standing committee on information ministry at a meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban observed that high duty on newsprint import has been creating troubles for the newspaper industry.

It also urged the government to formulate recommendations for the sixth wage board and to implement those without delay, chairman of the committee, Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury, told reporters.

Referring to the meeting decisions, the committee chairman said it also urged the government to pay off all due bills for advertisements to different newspapers and

to raise the present advertisement rates that were fixed a decade ago.

The committee also asked the ministry to submit a report in the next meeting after investigating allegations of discriminations in distribution of direct advertisements.

Ebadur Rahman, also a BNP lawmaker, said the committee expressed regret about yesterday's attack on journalists' leaders in Kushtia. Apart from the committee members and ministry officials, a number of editors of leading dailies and leaders of journalists' unions were present at the meeting on special invitation.

Editors at the meeting said publication cost of newspapers have gone up due to an increase in newsprint price. They said the existing duty on imported newsprint in Bangladesh is 29 percent whereas the duties in neighbouring countries like India, Nepal and

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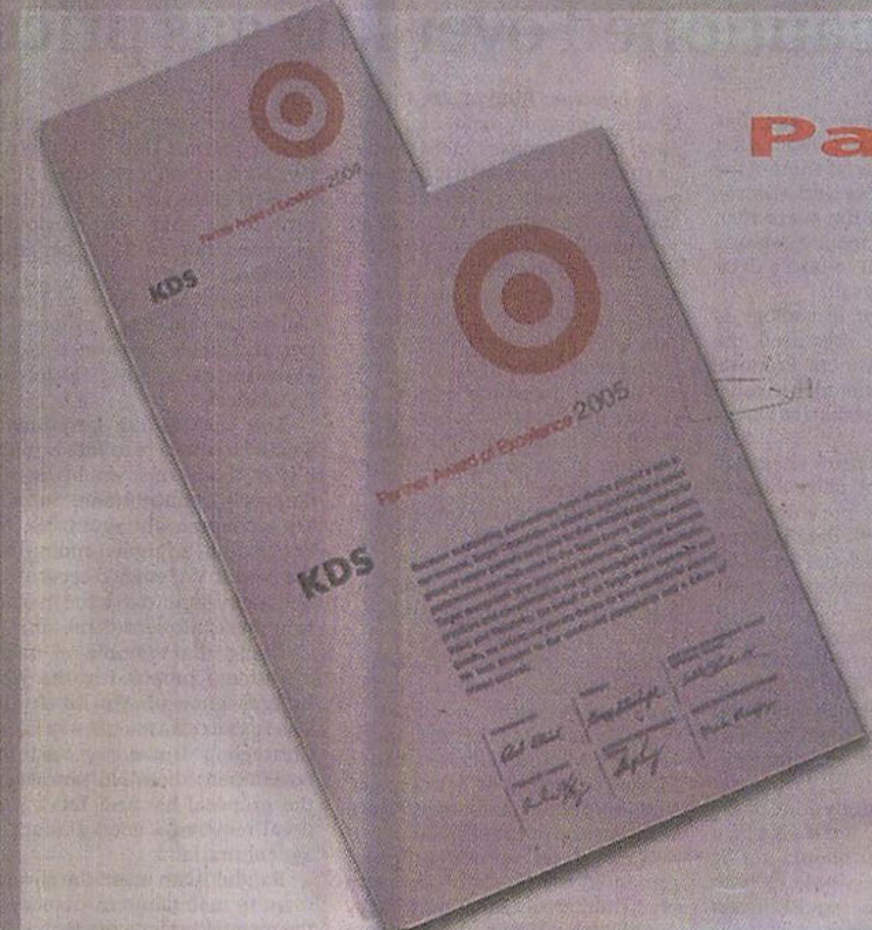
From Left to Right: Mr. Gregg Steinhafel, President, Target Corporation, Mr. Bob Ulrich, Chairman & CEO, Target Corporation, Mr. Alhaj Khalilur Rahman, Chairman & Managing Director, KDS Group with the award and Ms. Stacia Andersen, President, TSS/AMC.

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