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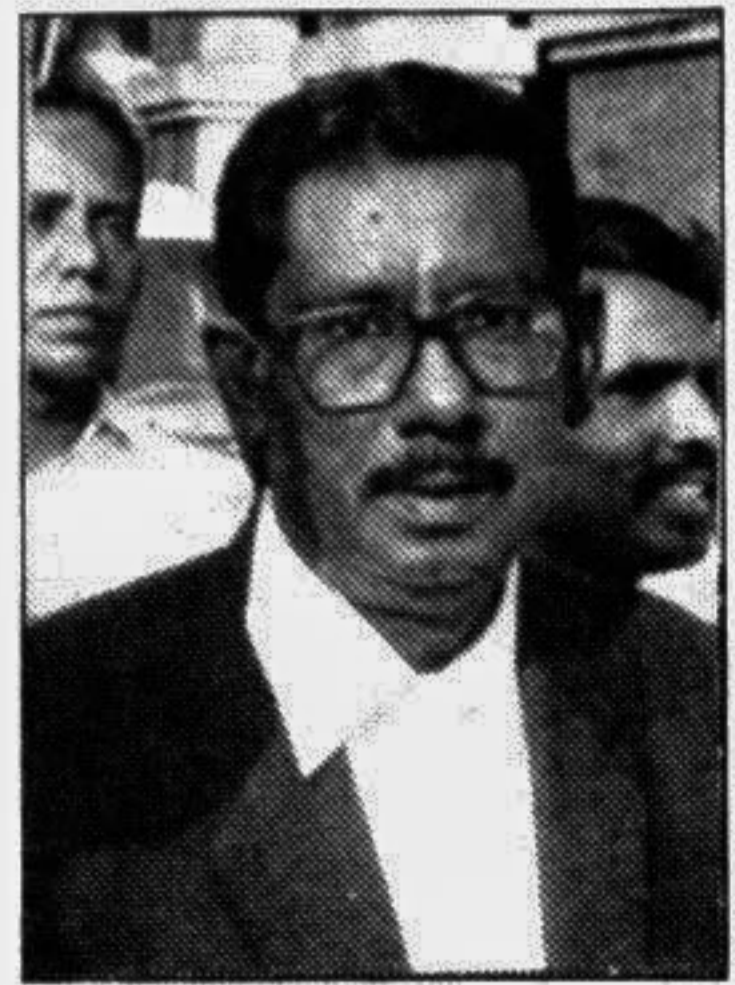


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Judge blasts role of army on Aug 15, 1975

By Staff Correspondent

The judge of the Bangabandhu Murder Case in his verdict yesterday bitterly criticised the role of the Bangladesh Armed Forces on August 15, 1975.

"Senior officers of Bangladesh Army, particularly those posted in Dhaka (at that time) did not perform their due role. Even they did not try to discharge their responsibility after having sufficient time," Kazi Golam Rasul observed in his judgement.

"It is a matter of great regret that even after receiving telephonic instructions from Bangabandhu they did not take any steps for his protection.

"Evidences, clearly proved that only a handful of junior officers/members of two regiments were involved in this killing."

"It is not understandable why the Armed Forces did not make any effort to control/dismantle these few army officers/members."

"This incident will remain as a permanent black spot for our Armed Forces in the annals of our national history," the judge observed.

15 to die for killing Bangabandhu

By Staff Correspondent

Twenty-three years, two months and three weeks after the fateful early hours of August 15, 1975, the historic judgement came yesterday. The Verdict: Guilty for 15, acquittal for four. The Sentence: Death, by firing squad in public.

At the dock yesterday were three of the 15: Lt Col (ret'd) Syed Faruq Rahman, Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shahrier Rashid Khan, Lt Col (ret'd) Mahiuddin Ahmed.

The rest 12, who remained fugitive during the trial but were awarded similar punishment in absentia, are: Lt Col (ret'd) Khandokar Abdur Rashid, Major (ret'd) Bazul Huda, Lt Col (ret'd) Shariful Haq Dalim, Major (ret'd) Sharful Hossain, Lt Col (ret'd) AM Rashed Chowdhury, Lt Col (ret'd) Mahiuddin Ahmed (Lancer), Lt Col (ret'd) SHMB Noor Chowdhury 11) Lt Col (ret'd) Abdul Aziz Pasha 12) Captain (ret'd) Mohammad Kismet Hashem 13) Captain (ret'd) Najmul Hossain Ansar 14) Captain (ret'd) Abdul Majed 15) Risaldar (ret'd) Moslemuddin alias Moslehuddin.

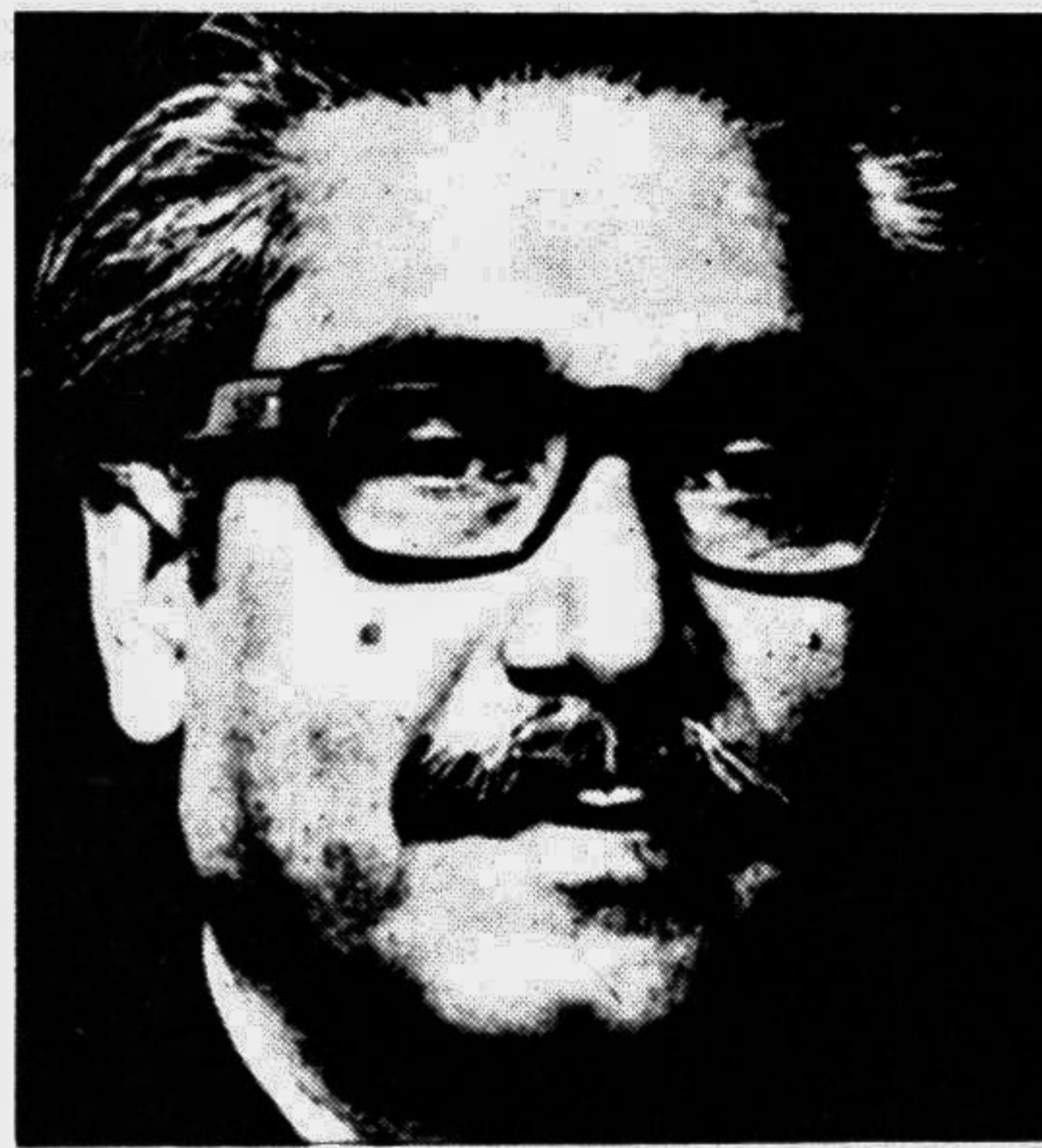
Lt Col (ret'd) Khandokar Abdur Rashid, Lt Col (ret'd) Aziz Pasha, Major (ret'd) Shariful Haq Dalim, Major (ret'd) Bazul Huda, Major (ret'd) Noor, Major Mohiuddin (lancer), Major (ret'd) Rashed Chowdhury, Major (ret'd) Ahmed Sharful Haas, Captain (ret'd) Abdul Majed, Lt (ret'd) Nazmul Ansar, Risaldar (ret'd) Moslemuddin.

The District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, Kazi Golam Rasul, gave the benefit of the doubt to the four acquitted.

The lone civilian accused in the case, Taheruddin Thakur, a former state minister for information, was acquitted. Three others acquitted -- Abul Hashem Mridha, Marfat Ali Shah and Abdul Wahab Joarder -- are former army personnel.

Two of the acquitted, Abul Hashem Mridha and Marfat Ali Shah are also absconding.

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Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (left) and his slain family members, from left, (top) Begum Fazilatunnesa, Sheikh Russel, Sheikh Kamal, Sultana Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, (above) Parvin Jamal Rosy, Sheikh Nasser and his military secretary Colonel Jamil. —Star file photo

And quiet they were

By Special Correspondent

Betraying no sign of remorse, the four accused in the Bangabandhu murder case sat quietly as they were pronounced guilty and sentenced to be executed by a firing squad for killing a President and the members of his family 23 years ago.

This was the first time in the nation's history that leaders of a putsch were tried in a civilian court. The normal process of criminal law was applied to try the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was murdered in his home on Aug 15, 1975.

The trial, housed at the century-old British era two-storey red-brick building at Sheikh Nazimuddin Road, adjacent to the entrance of the Dhaka Central Jail, drew a packed audience of lawyers sporting black coats, plainclothesmen who occupied most of the chairs, journalists and two diplomats.

A virtually impenetrable security blanket covered the Dhaka central jail and the adjacent guards room with their armory, which was served into

a special court to try the August 15 killers.

At least 2,000 police, plainclothesmen and troops of the Bangladesh Rifles provided the security cover. Even jittery officials forced journalists to leave behind their mobile phones, an essential tool now-a-days.

But it created some problems. Where to leave behind the phones? The police refused to keep them in their custody.

But mobile phones rang repeatedly during the 75-minute judgement read out by Judge Kazi Golam Rasul. Certain public prosecutors and influential people were allowed to retain the privilege of carrying the phones.

The roads leading to the court room, down the Chandkhar Pool and Chawkbazar, Begumbazar and Bangshal were off-limits to all vehicles.

Only pedestrians were allowed to move. But not hanging around the perimeter of the court.

Police repeatedly pushed away the crowd, keeping them

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48-hr hartal called by BNP, allies starts today

By Staff Correspondent

A 48-hour hartal across the country, called by BNP and its allies, begins from six this morning.

This is the longest ever general strike since the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assumed power 28 months back.

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia earlier on Saturday gave the call for hartal to protest 'attempt on her life' during a party rally in the city's Paltan Maidan the same day.

The public meeting organised to observe 'National Revolution and Solidarity Day' on November 7, however, ended in a fiasco following clashes between rival party activists and members of law enforcing

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Verdict proves people never accept injustice: Hasina

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said trial of the killers of Bangabandhu proved that people of Bangladesh never accepted any injustice and that the country's judiciary could function independently.

Giving her reaction to the verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case, the eldest daughter of the slain leader said, "The day this verdict is executed, people of Bangladesh would be free of all curses."

She literally burst into tears while talking with a group of newsmen at the Bangabandhu Bhavan, residence of the slain leader, where he along with his family members were killed 23 years ago. She reached there at 4:12 pm.

"The trial was done as per law and killers of all murders should be brought to book", she told waiting newsmen.

"Peace never comes in a country, where injustice is done", said Hasina, one of the two surviving family members of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The other surviving family member is her younger sister Sheikh Rehana.

In an emotion choked voice, Sheikh Hasina expressed her gratitude to the people as well as leaders and workers of her party, who, she said, protested injustice and even sacrificed their lives in the past to establish justice in the society.

As she recollected the memory of her ten-year-old innocent brother Sheikh Russel, tears kept rolling down her eyes till some of her relatives comforted and consoled her.

"Only he who has lost dear ones like me will be able to understand my pang and agony", she said.

Later, as senior party lead-

ers and ministers laid wreaths in front of the historic house at Road No. 32, Sheikh Hasina offered special prayers inside, said one of her aides.

UNB adds: Hasina said, "Truth and justice have triumphed at last...the killers were tried under the existing laws of the land. They committed a heinous crime."

The Prime Minister was at her Ganobhavan residence until the pronouncement of the verdict. After hearing the judgement, she went to the Bangabandhu Bhavan to show respect to her slain family members and express gratitude to the people.

Thousands of people including Awami League leaders and workers assembled outside the Bangabandhu Bhavan after the judgement was delivered.

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Four sent to condemned cell

By Staff Correspondent

Four of the 15 persons who were given capital punishment in the Bangabandhu Murder Case were sent to the condemned cell of the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday, home ministry officials said.

Three of them were arrested earlier and were at the dock when the judgement was pronounced. They are Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Faruk Rahman, Lt Col (relieved) Sultan Sahrier Rashid and Lt Col Mahiuddin Ahmed (former director of BNCC). They were sent to the condemned cell after they were brought back from the

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'An instance of fairness'

Chief Public Prosecutor in the Bangabandhu Murder Case Advocate Serajul Haq termed the much expected verdict as an instance of fair judgement.

"To ensure rule of law in the society, good judgement is a must. This is the first step towards achieving that aim," he told UNB.

The whole nation was awaiting the judgement of the Bangabandhu murder, he said adding that a fair judgement was necessary to correct the society.

"I tried to perform my responsibility in the case that I owe to the nation for long time," Serajul Haq, a boyhood friend of Sheikh Mujib, said in an emotion-choked voice.

The defence lawyers, during

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I expect reverse verdict from higher court: Defence lawyer

Main defence lawyer Khan Saifur Rahman has said he expects a reverse verdict from higher court in the Bangabandhu murder case.

"I expect a verdict from the High Court which will go vice versa," Saifur told UNB yesterday.

He said he would move for his client to the High Court soon.

According to legal procedure, appeal will have to be moved within 7 days of the verdict.

Farashuddin appointed new BB governor

The government on Thursday approved the appointment of Dr Farashuddin as the next governor of Bangladesh Bank, official sources said yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is learnt to have okayed the appointment.

Present governor Lutfur Rahman Sarkar's term expires on Wednesday.

Farashuddin, a former civil servant, had served as private secretary to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Earlier, the names of MR Khan, MD Sonali Bank, Ibrahim Khalid, Deputy Governor of BB and ERD Secretary Dr Mashur Rahman were pro-

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BNP, Jamaat mum

By Staff Correspondent

BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami refrained from making any statements on the verdict yesterday and did not take to the streets in the city yesterday apparently to avoid confrontation with the ruling Awami League which celebrated the verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

The AL brought out processions in the city welcoming the judgment pronounced yesterday.

"I have no comment on the issue," said Ashraf Hossain, acting secretary general of BNP, when asked to comment on the judgment.

A press statement will reach you if our party decides to react to the verdict," Hossain told a group of reporters at the party's Naya Paltan central office in the evening.

But no such statement reached the newspaper offices till late last night.

A vice-chairman of BNP and former information minister Nazmul Huda told the BBC that trial must take place for any killing. "But neutrality and propriety of this trial can be questioned as it had taken place after so many years".

He however added, "nothing can be said about propriety of the trial until completion of other legal courses in the case."

Jamaat-e-Islami secretary general Matjur Rahman Nizami also told BBC that he did not find it proper to comment on a court judgment. He, however, added all the accused in the case participated in the War of Liberation. "It's an internal matter of the pro-Liberation forces," he commented.

Although BNP was scheduled to hold demonstrations across the country on the day, it did not go for any public gathering or procession in the capital as part of the nationwide programme.

Earlier on Saturday, party chairperson Khaleda Zia announced a series of programmes, including yesterday's demonstration, to protest what she said an attempt on her life at a public meeting in the city on November 7.

But a BNP press release last night said processions were brought out at "different wards" of the Dhaka City Corporation on the day to drum up support

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Sultan Shahrier Rashid Khan, Mohiuddin (left), and Abdul Wahab Joarder (acquitted) and Syed Faruq Rahman being escorted to the court yesterday. — Star photo

For long, they waited for this day

Shahanara Abdullah whose two and a half years old son Sukanta Babu was killed on August 15, 1975, Sunday said she was looking for this day for long 23 years, reports UNB.

"I am happy, I am really happy... I got the verdict for which I have been cherishing for long 23 years," said the daughter-in-law of Abdur Rab Sherniabat.

Shahanara, wife of Chief Whip Abdur Hasnat Abdullah, along with some relatives came to the court to hear the historic verdict of Bangabandhu Murder Case.

Beauty Sherniabat, daughter of slain Abdur Rab Sherniabat, said, "I am delighted that the killers will have to face capital punishment."

"I am alive only to witness the execution of the verdict," said Beauty who was severely

injured with 10 bullets on 15 August.

A minister of Bangabandhu cabinet, Abdur Rab Sherniabat and his grandson Sukanta Babu were killed on 15 August.

Sultana's brother

Rafiqul Islam, elder brother of Sultana Kamal, said that he had expected a tougher punishment to the accused of the Bangabandhu murder case.

Giving his reaction to UNB, Rafiq said, "I would like to see that the killers are beaten to death by shoes rather than by hanging or shooting."

Sultana Kamal, wife of Sheikh Kamal, the eldest son of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, was among those killed on August 15.

Col Jamil's wife, daughter

Colonel Jamil's daughter Tehmina Enayef Tanu has said Almighty Allah finally done justice to the killers of Bangabandhu and her father.

"I feel, my father's soul finds peace today," Tanu said in her reaction to the court's verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

Colonel Jamil Ahmed, the Military Secretary to Bangabandhu, was shot dead by the killers near the Sobhanbag Masjid in the morning of August 15 while he was on way to the Dhanmondi residence of Bangabandhu responding to his call.

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Victims of Aug 15 mayhem

The family members who were killed along with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his Dhanmondi residence on the fateful night of August 15, 1975 are: Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib, Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, Sheikh Russel, Sultana Kamal, Sheikh Jamal Rosy, Sheikh Abu Naser and Col Jamiluddin Ahmed (Military Secretary to the President killed in front of Sobhanbag Mosque near Bangabandhu's residence).

Besides, others who were killed same night are: Abdur Rab Sherniabat, Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni, Begum Arzu Moni, Baby Sherniabat, Sukanta Abdullah, Shahid Sherniabat, and Abdur Nayeem Khan Rintu.

Bazul Huda brought back from Thailand

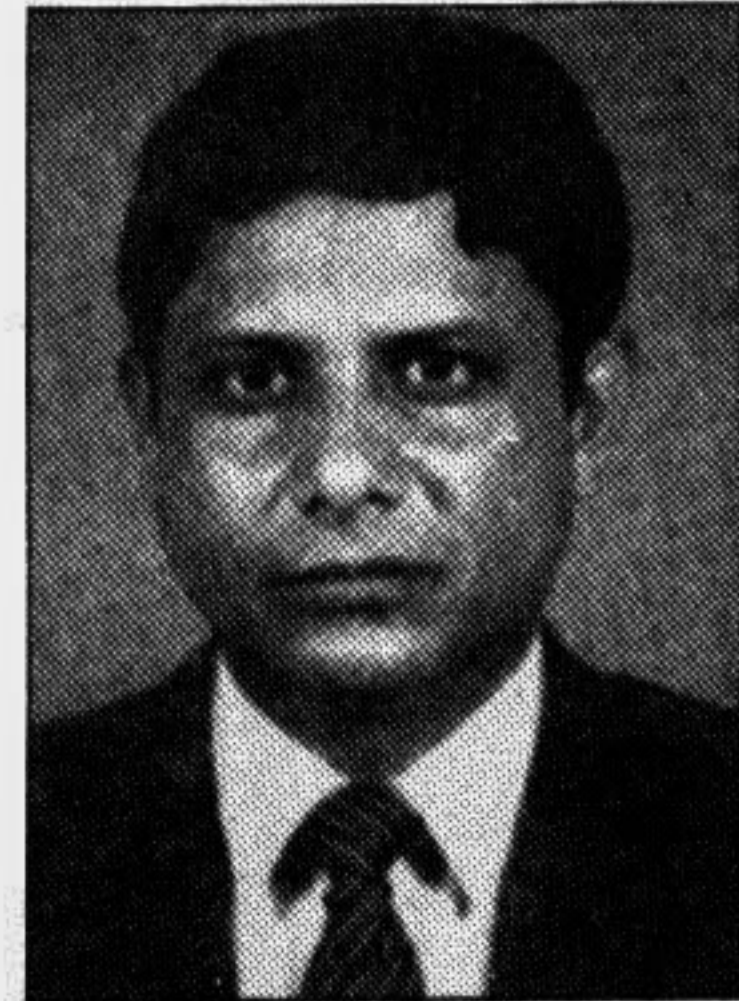
Only two hours after the historic verdict in the Bangabandhu murder case yesterday, one of the convicts, Bazul Huda, was brought back to the country from Thailand, reports UNB.

Confirming his extradition, police sources said the special flight carrying Huda landed at 4:30 pm at Tejgaon airport because of security reasons.

Huda is one of the 15 former army officers who were condemned to death by the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court for killing the founding father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975.

A two-member CID team

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Announcement
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