

Death penalty for Shihab's killers

Four found guilty, two acquitted of charges

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

Four persons are to die for abducting and killing schoolboy Shihab on February 7 in the city.

The Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, delivered the verdict yesterday at a crowded courtroom afternoon.

The convicts are Monir Hossain Lito, 20, Abu Sayeed, 19, Faisal Sharif Raju (age unknown), and Imran Hossain Sabuj (age unknown). Mahbulul Haq Rubel and Nasim Sheikh, the two other accused, were acquitted of the charges. Raju and Sabuj are absconding since the arrest of Lito and Sayeed.

Judge Hossain Shahid Ahmad pronounced the judgement five months eight days after filing of the case. The judge took his seat at 3:00pm and took 40 minutes to read out important parts of the 69-page judgement. He also said Raju plotted the killing.

The judgement said punishment of the fugitives would take effect when they will surrender or be arrested. The convicts can appeal to the High Court Division within seven days from the date of receipt of the judgement.

About 3,000 people flocked to the court compound and roads nearby to hear the judgement. Additional police forces were deployed there to maintain law and order.

Lito and Sayeed were produced before the court at 2:55pm under tight

security. They were in the dock when the judgement was given. Hearing the judgement Lito and Sayeed remained calm but the parents of Lito broke down at the courtroom.

Family members of Shihab were not present at the courtroom during the delivery of the judgement.

Shihab's father Khandaker Dildar Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday that they were happy with the judgement. But they felt that Rubel and Nasim who were acquitted of charges should meet the same fate since Lito and Sayeed disclosed their names while confessing to the killing after their arrest.

Asked whether they would file an appeal with the High Court Division against the acquittal of the two, Dildar said they were yet to make a decision about it.

Shihab's mother has been sick since her son's abduction and she is yet to recover, Dildar added.

AAM Talibur Rahman, headmaster of the Motijheel Model School and College where Shihab studied, told newsmen that the teachers were happy with the judgement and the quick disposal of the case. He added that such crimes would come down if such exemplary punishment was handed down.

Khandaker Shihab Ahmed, 13, was a student of class seven and a resi-



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Two kidnapped victims rescued from DU hall: 5 arrested

BSS, Dhaka

The Detective Branch (DB) police arrested five youths including a student from Shahidullah Hall of the Dhaka University and rescued two kidnapped victims from a room of the hall on Tuesday.

A team of DB police led by Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Ruhul Amin arrested the five from room number 2024 of the hall and rescued Nazmul Saadat Sadi and Emran Mahfuz Imon.

The arrested persons are Shafiqul Azam alias Sumon, Ashraful Alam alias Azad, Masudul Alam alias Masud, Abdullah Al Mamun and Latu.

Police said the arrested persons on Sunday last kidnapped Sadi and Imon from Mohammadpur Taj Mahal Road and demanded Taka one lakh over telephone from Sadi's father.

Police lodged a case with Ramna thana in this connection.

Cable operators go on strike from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cable television operators will keep suspended operation of all satellite channels across the country from noon today till realisation of their demands.

The decision was announced yesterday at a joint rally of the Cable Operators' Association of Bangladesh (COAB) and the Bangladesh Satellite Cable Network Owners' Association (SCNOA), held at the auditorium of Institute of Engineers' of Bangladesh (IEB).

Their demands include formulation of a national policy for cable operators, withdrawal of Value Added Tax (VAT) and supplementary tax on pay channels and tax holiday for cable operators for five years.

At the rally, leaders of the organisations urged the government to form a 'Satellite Channel Censor Board' to check and balance operation of cable channels in the country.

They also demanded of the government to declare cable television operation business an industry, bank loan for the operators, operation of eight channels in major cities

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U-turn on supplier's credit policy

Cabinet body okays costly, nonviable Barapukuria coal-fired power plant

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The government yesterday approved a low viability power scheme on supplier's credit, ignoring its own policy not to undertake any project on costly funds.

However, the government has decided not to approve at least immediately, two fertiliser projects on supplier's credit. But the final decision on the two di-ammonia phosphate (DAP) fertiliser projects would be taken after diplomatic consultations with Japan and China, which want to fund the schemes, said sources.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs yesterday gave the go-ahead to the US\$220 million Barapukuria coal-fired 250MW power project. But this scheme has been criticised by industry insiders for being at least \$70 million costlier than any plant of similar size.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman chaired the meeting of the committee.

The power project, to be implemented on Chinese supplier's credit, will now be sent to the cabinet for its

final nod, said the sources.

"We have not approved the two di-ammonia phosphate (DAP) fertiliser projects on Chinese and Japanese supplier's credit. We thought it might create a situation like KAFCO's and create a huge burden on the country," Saifur told waiting newsmen after the meeting.

"However, as both Japan and China have significant contributions to our development, we have decided to ask the foreign ministry to discuss the issue with the two countries. The foreign ministry will make them understand what an economic catastrophe the projects might bring to the country," he added.

The fertiliser project, the DAP-1, was undertaken in 2001 on Chinese supplier's credit at Tk 392.97 crore and the DAP-2 was initiated on Japanese supplier's credit at Tk 451.70 crore.

If the authorities decide on implementing the DAP-1, the production cost of each metric ton (MT) of fertiliser would be Tk 12,374. For DAP-2, the cost would be Tk

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Half a million in police dragnet

Half of them released without charges, many harassed

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

The police have arrested 480,097 people across the country since July 17 last year when the so-called 'special drive' began to crack down on crime and criminals, according to police record.

The list excludes people arrested on grounds other than criminal ones. Among the arrested, almost half were picked up without any specific charges and released after having been put through long legal procedures as the authorities failed to prove that they were guilty of any crime.

During this period, the police arrested 247,902 people wanted in different cases while 206,643 were arrested without any specific charges. The law enforcers also detained 3,156 listed criminals during the period. Besides, 7,933 firearms were seized and 4,950 people arrested in this connection across the country.

The seized firearms included light machine gun (LMG), sub-machine gun (SMG), rifle, self-loading rifle (SLR), revolver, pistol, pipe gun, shotgun and locally made gun. Police also seized 99,307 homemade bombs and crackers.

The police drive during the caretaker government till October 10 accounted for arrest of 126,273 people and recovery of 4,942 firearms. Some 3,027 were arrested and 1,399 listed criminals were locked up in jails on charge of possessing unauthorised firearms.

From October 11, 2001 - a day after the incumbent government was installed - till yesterday, the police arrested 352,456 people and 1,461 listed criminals and seized 2,875 firearms.

According to experts, the indiscriminate arrests have heavily burdened

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Next JS session in August

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad is likely to begin its next session late August, earlier than usual, as many of the lawmakers and officials are leaving for Namibia to attend the Commonwealth Conference 2002, scheduled in September, parliamentary sources said.

The parliament usually sits within 60 days from the prorogation of a session. But, this time, the authorities plan to hold the session at least 20 days ahead of the expiry of the maximum time-gap stated in the constitutional mandate.

"A good number of parliamentary members and officials would leave for Namibia in September to gather experience from the conference," Acting Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui told The Daily Star last night as Bangladesh would be hosting the Commonwealth Conference 2003, in Dhaka.

The next session, the fourth of the eighth parliament, would witness a presidential election as the

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PHOTO: STAR

Mother of Khandaker Shihab Ahmed, abducted and killed, breaks down in tears, as her other son leans over at their Khilgaon residence yesterday, on hearing the court verdict regarding her son's killing.

Govt to set up investment, trade centres abroad

BSS, Dhaka

The government has decided to set up Bangladesh Investment and Trade Centres in different important cities across the world, including Dubai and Frankfurt to enhance country's exports.

It was decided at the 15th meeting of the Board of Investment (BOI) with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair.

The Prime Minister at the meeting asked the ministries concerned and departments to gear up efforts to enhance exports, create employment opportunities and attract foreign investment.

Laying emphasis on ensuring quality treatment in the country, she underscored the need for setting up a hospital of global standard here to enable the Bangladeshi patients to undergo treatment in the country instead of going abroad for the purpose. She said setting up of such standard hospital would save hard-earned foreign currency.

The Prime Minister said arrangements would also be made to enable

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Erratum

In the lead story in Tuesday's edition of The Daily Star headlined, "Mig-29s to be jettisoned", it was mistakenly reported that the maintenance of the fighter jets costs the country one billion dollar a year. In fact, it would be one billion taka. We regret the inadvertent error.

Announcement

The Daily Star introduces its weekly science and technology special *StarTech* from tomorrow. Don't miss the chance to catch up with the latest trends in science and technology.

Old habits die hard

NAZMUL ASHRAF

It comes as a little surprise that the Treasury Bench has so far bullied a defiant opposition and done everything possible to make it difficult for them to stay in the Jatiya Sangsad. They can always look back and say that they are simply paying their predecessors back in their own coin. This has been the practice so far. And, there has been no exception this time around.

No sooner had the main opposition Awami League made its maiden appearance in the nine-month-old parliament during its just-concluded session the ruling BNP started doing just what the former had done to them, when it was in the opposition.

Apparently to gag the main opposition party, the BNP employed all bad tactics that were resorted to in the previous parliaments. Abuse of its strength in the House aside, the ruling party overtly guided the Chair to act in a manner that

moments after she and other AL lawmakers made their maiden appearance in the House.

In line with promises made earlier by Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar (now the acting president) and the ruling BNP, Siddiqui did not interrupt the opposition leader who came down hard on the government while speaking about a wide range of issues -- from alleged rigging in the October election to political persecution.

However, the Chair asked the opposition leader to finish only when the angry Treasury Bench members started shouting at him for allowing an unscheduled statement for an unlimited time. Amid continued shouts by the ruling BNP

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PM still mum over cabinet reshuffle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The much-talked-about cabinet reshuffle has become uncertain, with the prime minister yet to issue an instruction in this regard.

The Cabinet Division has already prepared about 20 letters of resignation by ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers on the instruction from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Also prepared are about five papers on oaths and affirmations of freshers to the cabinet.

Official sources said Prime

Minister Khaleda Zia may anytime ask more than 20 ministers, state ministers and deputy ministers to resign.

Two advisors to the prime minister and two to three ministers and state ministers are expected to be appointed. Besides, Khaleda is likely to change portfolios of several ministers and state ministers.

A strong speculation surfaced yesterday at the Bangladesh Secretariat, the PMO and the BNP office that major changes may take place today, but none was sure about it.

The speculation peaked up since Khaleda's return from the United States and even stronger with conclusion of the budget session on July 15.

"Any reshuffle in the council -- downsizing it or otherwise -- entirely depends on the prime minister. She knows when she wants the cabinet reshuffle," said a senior minister on condition of anonymity.

Most senior ministers have suggested that Khaleda bring changes to the council immediately, considering various aspects, includ

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Police SI shot dead in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Sub Inspector Altaf Hossain, 45, of Chulka Police Camp under Bagherhat Sadar thana was gunned down by unidentified miscreants at about 7 pm yesterday on Khulna-Mongla highway.

The assailants fired on him while he was returning to the police camp.

He was shot in the head, chest and back and died on the spot.

The killers fled the scene firing blank shots and exploding hand bombs.

SI Altaf Hossain joined Chulka Police Camp on July 26 this year with special assignment to arrest listed criminals of Chulka and contain highway robberies.

He was on duty few minutes before being gunned down, OC of Sadar thana said.

Shehabuddin Nafa ill in China

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shehabuddin Ahmed Nafa, a special correspondent of The Daily Star, has fallen seriously ill while on a visit to China and been admitted to the Shanghai First Hospital for treatment.

Nafa, a seasoned reporter, reached China on July 14 as part of a Jatiya Press Club delegation at the invitation of the China Journalists Association.

The next day (Monday) he fell seriously ill and had to undergo an operation, according to a message from the Bangladesh embassy in Beijing.

He would require two more operations and need to stay back in China for three or four weeks for further treatment. His condition is said to be stable but serious.

His friends, relatives and well-wishers are requested to pray for his early recovery.