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JAIL KILLING CASE

Verdict shifted to Sept 21 as judge reports sick

Taheruddin Thakur's lawyer files last minute petitions for adjournment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday put off the verdict on the historic Jail Killing Case to September 21 to the resentment of the prosecution and some defence lawyers, as the judge was ill. The judgement, scheduled to come about 29 years after the brutal assassination of four national leaders who gave political leadership during the Liberation War, was adjourned one hour and 15 minutes after schedule for pronouncement, as Judge Mohammad Motiur Rahman could not turn up in court because of illness.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

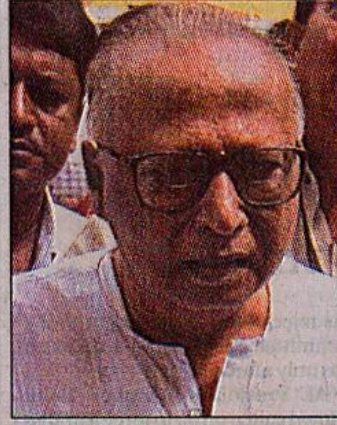


PHOTO: STAR

(Clockwise from top right) The accused in the Jail Killing Case KM Obaidur Rahman, Shah Moazzem, Taheruddin Thakur, Khairuzzaman, Nurul Islam Manzoor, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan and Syed Farook Rahman appear before court yesterday.

Outlaws kill 3 in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishitia

Janajuddho, a faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML), killed three people including a woman after rape in two incidents in Chuadanga last night.

Ten armed Janajuddho men stormed into the house of Teppur in Sadar upazila and picked one Kazol, 32 along with a woman named Silpi alias Bhabna, 24, at around 11 pm. Police said both Kazol and Silpi were involved with the outlaws. They took the two to a nearby field and slaughtered them. Police said the woman might have been raped before being killed.

In another incident, the same gang of outlaws stormed into the house of one Sahabul Islam alias Saha at Aminpur village in Jibonagar upazila at around 12 midnight and picked him up at

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Morshed blasts Delhi for 'unfair trade'

Says Dhaka too can retaliate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday fired a broadside at Delhi for what he said was restricting imports of Bangladeshi goods into India to keep the balance of trade in its favour, despite repeated calls for an 'equitable bilateral trade'.

"Dhaka too is capable of taking similar restrictive steps against Indian goods to arrive at a 'win-win' situation," Morshed warned while speaking as the chief guest at the inaugural session of an 'India-Bangladesh Dialogue of Young Journalists' organised by

Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) at its office in the city.

In presence of Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri, the foreign minister said, "If Dhaka wanted to establish a win-win situation, we could end India's \$3 billion trade here by issuing an SRO [Statutory Regulatory Order] on all Indian goods entering Bangladesh."

Turning to a different direction, Morshed lambasted India for over-criticism saying if the larger neighbour of Bangladesh continues to blame it for things across the spectrum, future bilateral discussions would be in jeopardy.

"Stop talking through the media and talk straight to us," he told the Indian government, adding, "We don't do politics within the family, and South Asia is our family. It's very important to discuss the issues across the table instead of hiding those under the carpet."

Speaking on the August 21 grenade attacks Morshed said, "Most countries said it was an attack on the country's democracy and phoned to both the prime minister and the opposition leader. But," in an oblique reference to India, he said, "Some people thought it otherwise."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

'Time bomb' at Willes Little Flower School

Kids, workers injured by abandoned bombs; 2 picked for threat-call to CUVC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A time bomb like substance was found inside a toilet of Willes Little Flower School (WLFS) at Kakrail yesterday that panicked students, guardians and teachers.

In Shyampur, a toddler and her two minor sisters were injured when a homemade bomb they were unknowingly playing with went off and two day labourers suffered injuries at Gulistan as two homemade bombs hidden in piles of rubble exploded while they were

removing them yesterday.

WLFS staff Abdul Karim at around 12 noon first noticed a red scotch tape wrapped small jarda container with a Casio wrist watch and wires at the cornice of the toilet of Nutun Bhawan and informed the school authority of it.

Ramna police said despite being informed of the matter they could not remove the device as they have no expertise in explosives. Later, a police sub-inspector from Detective Branch (DB) was called in, but he too

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Antitank shell found at Sylhet house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Local police yesterday recovered a live explosive device that experts say is an antitank shell from the same house where a severe blast Sunday morning killed a day-labourer and his minor nephew and injured seven others including women and children.

Showing the 'device' to newsmen at the office of the superintendent of police yesterday afternoon, Deputy Inspector General of Police AKM Mahfuzul Haque said they found it wrapped with plastic sheet lying on a veranda, several feet off the place

of Sunday's blast.

"We don't know exactly what it is, but it appears to be a sort of dangerous explosive," the DIG said pointing at the 13-inch-long bottle-shaped metallic device of a 75-millimetre diameter and weighing about 10 kilograms.

A retired army artillery officer, Brigadier General Jubayer, however told The Daily Star the device is an antitank shell called Blind and is fired by recoilless rifle.

Police officials said, after the inhabitants of the house in their confessional statements said there

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

A trial in camera?

Media denied access to court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prohibiting journalists yesterday from entering the court that delivered the verdict of Jail Killing case turned it into a 'trial in camera', aggrieved newsmen said.

Although it was an open trial, police barred journalists waiting since the morning from entering into not only the courtroom but also the court premises, forcing them to stand on the road in front until the court was adjourned in the noon.

The security men, on the other hand, offered VIP treatment to the accused and their relatives.

When journalists approached the guards standing at the entrance of the court premises at around 8:30am, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Kotwali) Reazul Karim Mollick said, "You'll be allowed in after the public prosecutor comes. I've already talked with him about it."

But, when photojournalists tried to take photographs of KM Obaidur Rahman, an accused on bail in the case, at 10:30am, police chased them away.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Case lands in new labyrinth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The verdict on the brutal assassination of four national leaders is likely to run into further judicial tangles, as a lawyer on Saturday filed two petitions in the last-minute bid to save his client.

ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul on behalf of accused Taheruddin Thakur filed the petitions with Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, appealing for adjournment of the verdict.

Syed Nazrul Islam, acting president of Bangladesh government in exile, Tajuddin Ahmed, prime minister, M Mansur Ali, finance minister, and AHM Qamaruzzaman, minister of home affairs, relief and rehabilitation, during the Liberation War were killed inside Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

The lawyer appealed to court to ask the then deputy superintendent of police Saifuddin Ahmed, the second investigation officer, to appear in court. He also appealed to court to visit Bangabhaban, the scene of conspiracy to kill the four

leaders.

The prosecution and some defence lawyers strongly opposed the petitions terming them as an excuse for delaying the verdict on the historic Jail Killing Case, which was scheduled for yesterday 29 years into the killing -- in a delay blamed on interventions by governments and legal tangles.

Mahbubur Rahman, counsel of another accused Bazul Huda, said the petitions would delay the verdict -- a view echoed by KM Obaidur Rahman's defence lawyer Abdul Majid Munshi.

Talking to The Daily Star, former chief special public prosecutor Anisul Haque said the court should have instantly rejected the petitions. "If time is granted on the basis of an application, it will be unprecedented, but if the court feels it needs more time to deliver the judgement, then I have nothing to say," Anisul added.

Mohammad Sirajul Islam, acting judge of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, fixed September 21

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Leaders' families term it mysterious

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Families of four national leaders assassinated in Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975 yesterday termed reschedule of the judgement date 'mysterious' and feared the government might have a role in it.

They said the delay in delivering verdict appeared to be the government interference in the trial process with a motive to let the criminals go scot-free.

"The entire nation was agog with expectation that the criminals would get capital punishment for the hideous massacre. But the verdict date has been rescheduled in an unprecedented manner that has diminished our hopes for justice," Mohammad Nasim, son of the slain finance minister MMansur Ali, told The Daily Star.

"Reschedule of the verdict date is hard to treat as an isolated affair as the ruling parties are desperate to save the accused in the killings," said Nasim, the former home minister of the previous Awami League (AL) government.

In the same systematic way the government has been delaying implementation of the verdict of the Bangabandhu murder case, Nasim alleged.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Police take away an explosive container, suspected to be a time bomb, found inside a toilet of Willes Little Flower School yesterday.

First pvt airline starts int'l flights today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Private carrier GMG Airlines launches international flight operation today.

The 45-minute international flight from Chittagong to Kolkata will be the first of its kind by a private airline in Bangladesh.

GMG's 37-seater Dash 8-100 aircraft will take off from Chittagong Shah Amanat International Airport at 11:00am today and land at Kolkata Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport at around 11:45am. High officials of the airline and a group of newsmen will fly the inaugural flight.

GMG Airlines will organise two inauguration ceremonies, one in Chittagong and the other in Kolkata, today to mark the occasion.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

One case, 7 judges

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Seven judges conducted the historic Jail Killing Case since the trial started way back in 1998.

The judges are Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Golam Rasul, Metropolitan Sessions Judge Sheikh Rezwana Ali, Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge AK Roy, Metropolitan Sessions Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa, Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Mollah Mostafa Kamal, Mohammad Motiur Rahman and Mohammad Sirajul Islam.

Judge Golam Rasul went on retirement after delivering verdict of the Bangabandhu murder case while Judge Sheikh Rezwana Ali was appointed justice to the High Court.

Judge AK Roy was transferred as a secretary to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs and Judge Ahmed Jamil Mostafa retired.

Judge Mollah Mostafa Kamal had been promoted to District and Sessions Judge while Judge Motiur Rahman fell sick yesterday and could not attend the court to deliver the much-anticipated judgement.

Judge Mohammad Sirajul Islam has also been promoted to district judge and is likely to join the Tribunal for Prevention of Public Safety Disturbances in Khulna tomorrow.

PM for cross-country talks on sharing common rivers

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said it would be the best if countries sharing common rivers could sit together with a negotiating attitude for common interest to formulate a timely plan of action to reduce the severity of flood.

"Bangladesh is not the origin of severe floods. So, we do not have all solutions in our hands to reduce the intensity of floods," she told a national workshop on flood.

She said we share 54 rivers that originated in India, China, Nepal and Bhutan.

Inaugurating the three-day workshop on "Options for Flood Risk and Reduction Damage in Bangladesh," the prime minister hoped that participants in the workshop would also put forward recommendations on what types of bilateral, regional and international cooperation are needed in the current perspective.

The workshop was attended by

ministers, public representatives, civil and military officials, experts, professionals, diplomats, and representatives of development partners, NGOs and civil society.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) organised the in-depth workshop, first of its kind in the country, at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Center.

Khaleda said the country would have to find out ways to minimise the loss and damage from major floods. Otherwise, she cautioned, the hard earned progress and advancement will be affected again and again, and "we will lag behind".

She said the devastating floods had been occurring frequently in Bangladesh for the last two decades, gradually increasing the magnitude of losses as well as the duration of floods.

She said the reasons behind it include construction of structures and carrying out activities that lead to destruction of ecology and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

List of criminals with bomb records made

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Intelligence agencies have made a list of criminals having track record of preparing or using explosives across the country to find out a lead to the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally that killed 19 people and injured over 200 others.

Sources said the list will be given to Rab, police and intelligence officials to launch a crackdown to nab the suspects. Once they are arrested, investigators will grill them to determine whether they have links to the grenade attack.

As part of the probe into the grisly incident, police and intelligence agency officials continued to search for Mukul, a charge-sheeted accused in the Badda arms and ammunition haul case but they could not trace his whereabouts till yesterday.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) started quizzing Abdur Rahman, who reportedly resembles one of the suspects seen roaming on Bangabandhu Avenue in the video footage of the August 21 incident.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

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