

Nine including

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court yesterday following prolonged quizzing over the serial bombings.

Our Sathkira correspondent reports: Police arrested Indian citizen Gias Uddin, 38, one of the most wanted suspects in Sathkira, in Kalara Bazar at 12:15pm yesterday. Gias, son of Omar Ali of Nityanandakati village in North 24 Parganas, West Bengal, along with his family lives in a rented house in Kadamtala near the town.

Also a local leader of banned Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Gias told police he was tasked with blasting bombs at Sathkira bus terminal.

Police sources said Gias passed the school final-level examination from India and worked as a private tutor before he came to Bangladesh in early 1990's and married a local woman in Kalara.

He served as an Imam at Kashpur Ahle Hadith Mosque, but the mosque committee sacked him in 2002 learning his link to religious extremists.

The sources said Gias joined the JMB after he came in contact with its chief Abdur Rahman in 2001.

Another Indian national arrested on August 23 but released for unknown reasons was again held yesterday, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

Police said Sayel Hossain, 35, a resident of Kaliganj village in Ranaghat in West Bengal, entered Bangladesh on August 3 without passport and visited different shrines.

He was sent to jail custody following a case filed against him for entering Bangladesh without valid documents.

Our court correspondent adds: Former Islamic Foundation director Moulana Fariduddin Masud was again placed on remand on expiry of his five-day remand.

Airport Police produced him before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka seeking a 10-day remand.

The investigation officer (IO) told the court Masud has direct link to the serial explosions and he withdrew crores of taka from his bank accounts before August 17.

Moreover, he needs to be quizzed further to find out information about withdrawal of money from his accounts, the IO said.

The defence lawyer, Syed Rezaur Rahman, submitted a bail petition and appealed for cancellation of the remand prayer.

The lawyer said his client was implicated in the case as part of conspiracy to harass him.

Moreover, Masud's name was not in the first information report (FIR), but he was implicated to vilify his image in the society, the counsellor added.

Masud told the court he has always worked for peace and prosperity of the country. "I've taken part in an anti-terrorism conference in England and delivered speeches on the issue on several occasions. I'm also author of several books against terrorism."

UNB from Naogaon reports: Police arrested two more suspects - Abul Kalam Azad, 45, and Abdur Majid Master, 35, - in Manda upazila yesterday. The police said they are active JMB members.

Our Khulna correspondent adds: Police arrested Ahle Hadith Andolan, Bangladesh (Ahab) leader Zafarullah in Bamandanga village in Rupsha upazila on Sunday.

Bagerhat police arrested JMB leaders Abul Kuddus, superintendent of Dighra Dakhal Madrasa in Mongla, and Siddiqur Rahman in Swarnkhola upazila the same day. Ahab leader Golam Mokadir Babu, Abul Kalam Azad and Mujibur Rahman were sent back to Khulna

after being quizzed at Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC). Police sent them to jail showing them arrested in the August 17 blasts case.

BDNEWS reports from Panchagarh: Police nabbed three more suspects on Sunday night but released one of them.

The two arrestees are Md Baduzzaman, 32, superintendent of Panchagarh Satmera Darululal Dakhal Madrasa, and Khalilur Rahman Pradhan alias Khalil Pradhan, 50, of Bhaulaganj in Debiganj upazila.

Our Tangail correspondent adds: Two out of seven arrestees admitted their link to the JMB, saying they had physical training at Delduar stadium a few months ago.

Police interrogating the two - Mohammad Yasin, 18, a muezzin, and Rahmatullah alias Manun, 25, - said they are well trained and remain tight-lipped. They are facing a seven-day remand.

The police said they have released five others yesterday as allegations against them were not proved.

Locals said the JMB chief and his brother Alaur Rahman, chief of JMB military wing, used to visit about 50 madrasas in Delduar.

They said militants started their activities centring Barapakhia Charpara Madrasa, while its teacher, Harun, was the organiser of the JMB activities in Delduar.

The officer-in-charge of Delduar Police Station said they are hunting for Khaled Siddique of Singharaj village. Under Khaled's leadership an experimental explosion was carried out at Nagarpur on June 13.

Meantime, police in mid-June took two alleged militants to a court showing them arrested in a robbery case, though they were nabbed from Delduar for their militant activities and possessing bombs and arms, reports BDNEWS.

One of them has already gone into hiding after obtaining bail from the court.

Police said locals of Tarabari in Nagarpur held the two - Mainul Islam Nagar Miah, 25, of Bogra and Sherbaul Salehin Razan, 24, of Merspur - following two explosions and turned them in to police.

In Bandarban, mysterious leaflets were circulated by post in the name of Bangladesh Islam Rakshita Parishad yesterday, according to the news agency.

The handbills headlined "To the activists of Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh" urged the young to join armed struggle.

Govt yet to near the root
A government spokesman yesterday admitted that they are yet to dig out the root of the August 17 bombing though some grassroots activists were arrested.

"It was not possible for us to go to the root of the attack," Mohammad Mohsin, joint secretary (political) of the home ministry, said at a regular press briefing.

Those who have confessed to their involvement in the blasts are 'base-level workers,' Mohsin told journalists at the ministry.

He said six members of JMB have revealed some names including their leaders, which cannot be disclosed for the sake of the investigation.

The joint secretary said some important information is likely to be retrieved from a member who is learnt to be a leader of the upper tier.

He said 169 people have so far been arrested in connection with the blasts.

As many as 41 were brought to the JIC and 16 of them are still being quizzed at the cell, while the rest have been sent back.

He said six - four from Sathkira and two from Kushtia - of the arrestees admitted to their involvement in the August 17 attack.

Rules of Mustaque, Sayem

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fourth schedule of the constitution becomes illegal. The paragraph says, "The Proclamations of the 20th August, 1975, and 8th November, 1975, and Third Proclamation of the 29th November, 1976, and all other Proclamations and Orders amending or supplementing them, hereinafter in this paragraph collectively referred to as the said Proclamations and all Martial Law Regulations, Martial Law Orders and all other laws made during the period between the 15th day of August, 1975 and the date of revocation of the said Proclamations and withdrawal of Martial Law (both days inclusive), hereinafter in this paragraph referred to as the said period, shall be deemed to have been validly made and shall not be called in question in or before any Court or Tribunal on any ground whatsoever."

Similarly, paragraph 18 of the fourth schedule becomes illegal. It says, "All Proclamations, Proclamation Orders, Martial Law Regulations, Martial Law Orders and other laws made during the period between the 15th August, 1975, and the 9th April, 1979 (both days inclusive), all amendments, additions, modifications, substitutions and omissions made in this Constitution during the said period by any such Proclamation, all orders made, acts and things done, and actions and proceedings taken, or purported to have been made, done or taken, by any person or authority during the said period in exercise of the powers derived or purported to have been derived from any such Proclamation, Martial Law Regulation, Martial Law Order or any other law, or in execution of or in compliance with any order made or sentence passed by any court, tribunal or authority in the exercise or purported exercise of such powers, are hereby ratified and confirmed and are declared to have been validly made, done or taken and shall not be called in question in or before any court, tribunal or authority

on any ground whatsoever." The court passed verdict in response to a writ petition challenging the Martial Law Regulation (MLR) 7 of 1977, which tried legalising all illegal acts of the Martial Law government prior to that time.

Masudul Alam filed the petition on behalf of Bangladesh Italian Marble Works Company (BIMWVC), reclaiming a cinema hall in Wiseghat in Dhaka that it lost during the martial law rule.

The Attorney General's Office yesterday declined to comment, but sources said the government will soon appeal the verdict at the Appellate Division.

The BIMWVC once used to own the Moon Cinema Hall in Wiseghat. After the independence, the cinema hall was announced abandoned and the government handed it over to the Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust. The marble works company filed a writ petition in 1977, claiming its ownership. In 1977, the High Court asked the government to hand over the hall to the company. However, the MLR 7 negated the High Court order, making the cinema hall continue to be an abandoned property.

In 1994, the BIMWVC again filed a writ petition. But the High Court and later the Appellate Division said that since the fifth amendment has validated the MLR 7, the company cannot reclaim the property.

Finally, the BIMWVC moved against the validity of MLR 7 in 2000. The implications of the petition have turned out to be far-reaching, as it hits a wide area of unconstitutional and undemocratic power transfers in the volatile mid-seventies.

Barrister Azmatul Hossain stood for the petitioner. He was assisted by Barristers ABM Siddiqur Rahman and Mezbaur Rahman. Additional Attorney General Fida M Kamal moved for the state while Barrister Akhtar Imam represented Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust.

Harmful

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cream and selling them at Chawkbazar.

The mobile court seized ten jars of chemicals and two drums full of artificial materials that were used to produce cosmetics items without the permission of the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI).

"The owner of the factory does not even know how to read and write, but he become a chemist and has been producing cosmetics," said Md. Rakan Ud Doulah, the magistrate of the mobile court.

Abdul Miah could not be found, but the court seized the materials and arrested his wife. A case against the couple was filed under the Special Power Act-1974.

Another two mobile courts raided the Tejganj and Gulshan police station areas and filed 14 cases and collected a total of Tk 1.53,000 from different restaurants, bakeries, sweetmeat shops and other food traders for not maintaining hygiene standards.

Meanwhile in Narayangganj, six samples of seized rotten wheat have been found to be inedible. A special team led by magistrate Halmuzzaman seized a total of 11,186 sacks of rotten wheat on August 7 from the Niltaganj area of the town, where most of the flourmills are situated, our Narayangganj correspondent reports. Razzak Traders imported the wheat to store and make flour.

All six samples were separately tested at the Mohakhali Public Health Institute. An analyst involved in the testing has commented that the wheat seemed to be rotten and inedible. The test reports were submitted yesterday to the court.

Police sources said a syndicate imported the wheat from India as poultry feed and intended to mix it with good wheat.

AL men march

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ment is trying to make the country a communal state by destroying the spirit of the Liberation War, the speakers said.

The forces of evil killed Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, but they could not kill the ideal of Bangabandhu as he is immortal to all progressives, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said.

The government is turning the country into a terrorist state, Mohammad Hanif said, adding that the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts occurred with the direct patronisation of the government.

He urged the countrymen to be united to oust the government to establish a government of the people.

Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzaq MP, Tofail Ahmed, Sajeda Chowdhury, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Kader, Suranjit Sengupta, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, Rahmatullah Chowdhury also spoke at the rally.

Aug 21 suspect

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of the most wanted criminals Subrata Bain Shuvro and Mukul carried out the August 21 attacks.

CID produced Monzur before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court Dhaka with a 10-day remand prayer.

The forwarding report placed before the court said Monzur drove Mukul and others on a microbus to Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21 last year and he knows all the culprits involved in the bombing. So he needs to be interrogated to find out clues of the incident and whereabouts of the bombers, the report said.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza granted a seven-day remand for interrogation after the hearing.

Saibal Saha Partha, Abdur Rahman, Habib alias Hannan, Waliullah, Hasan Zahid Tusher, Zahir Hossain, Akhter, Jiten, Monir, Mohammad Hossain, Ayub Ali, George Miah, Moklesur Rahman and Badsha Miah were arrested in the August 21 grenade attack case filed by the police on August 22.

Among them Partha, Abdur Rahman and Moklesur were granted bail from the High Court.

Outlaw killed

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police conducted another raid early yesterday to nab his accomplices and recover illegal firearms and ammunition.

When police reached Underhanmanik area, Mithu's accomplices opened fire on the law enforcers, forcing them to retreat.

During the shootout, Mithu was shot and died instantly, police said. However, the accomplices of Mithu managed to flee the scene, leaving behind a revolver, a shutter gun and eight bullets.

Police said Mithu was accused in 15 criminal cases, including nine for murder.

Saarc information

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film festival and a Saarc media development fund.

The recommendations of the meeting will be placed in the Saarc Summit in Dhaka in November.

In his welcome address, Information and Communications Minister of Nepal Tanka Dhakal said that Nepal will press for mutually shared information on criminal activities to combat terrorism that has become a major "tritant" in the region.

Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister for Information and Media Cegu Iseaden and Bangladesh's Information and Communications Secretary Md Mahabubar Rahman are representing their respective countries.

Power sector

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of a newspaper item. "You should make comments after scrutinizing the procurement process in the power sector," he added.

He pointed out, "It should be checked whether the newspaper item or the correspondent who has covered the news report is biased or not," and questioned, "How much honest he is?"

Earlier, addressing the inaugural session of a two-day international workshop on Infrastructure Financing at the Bangladesh Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, Wallich alleged that, due to lack of corporate governance, serious corruption is occurring in the infrastructure, especially in the power sector of Bangladesh.

"Over the past 6 years, some 15 power plants have been publicly tendered but only 3 were awarded. The procurement process followed was questionable and non-transparent and not in the interest of good outcomes for Bangladesh," she said.

"Had the tendering process not been undermined, two world-class project finance structures -- Meghnaghat II and Sirajganj -- could already be providing 900 MW of very low-cost power to the system. Instead, we now see load shedding of about 900 MW a day, expensive suppliers credits, and contingent liabilities, for the government," the WB country director said.

Against a plan of adding 3000 mw by 2007, Wallich sees only 730 mw in the pipeline -- an amount that does not even meet the current shortfall.

Commenting outside her scripted speech, Wallich referenced a report in yesterday's Daily Star that described the government's ill-conceived crash programme to add 430 mw power by the next election, and said, "In the Fenchuganj power project, there has been repeated re-tendering [six times]... This happened because of someone's personal interest [to grab the project]."

Polls financing

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and for those of us who would like to help finance it," she added.

Wallich's observations elicited sharp reaction from State Minister for Power Iqbal Hassan Mahmood who along with Finance minister M Saifur Rahman was taking part in the workshop.

Mahmood claimed that the newspaper reports make the picture of corruption look grim. Saifur Rahman said corruption has declined in the last one year.

Wallich in her speech said political parties lack financing mechanisms and raise huge sums of funds for national elections through corruption including irregular public procurement and a system of patronage and influence in all sectors and ministries.

"I cannot vouch for the number and it may well be apocryphal. This is about \$3.3 billion or five percent of GDP, a large number for a country at Bangladesh's income level," she noted.

"If true, this amounts to \$21 per capita paid by each and every Bangladesh, or to put it another way, it's a 5.3 percent tax on the average income of all Bangladeshis. And yet the ceiling of election spending/contributions is a fraction of this and the parties have no audited accounts," she quipped.

Addressing the inaugural session of the two-day international workshop on Infrastructure Financing in Bangladesh at a city hotel, she also said, "Unfortunately, once political parties become dependent on funding from routine corruption in the sectors, the systemic corruption that pervades the system is self-reinforcing."

"Until and unless the system of election financing is addressed, infrastructure governance reforms will be struggling uphill--improvements will occur, but cannot be fully successful unless the bigger picture of election financing is also reformed," she observed. Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the Board of Investment (BoI) have organised the workshop sponsored by WB.

"The power sector, as President Wolfowitz noted, is a tempting target [for corruption], given the magnitude of its transactions. The government of Bangladesh must remain alert, lest this be allowed to happen," she pointed out.

"So what about solutions?" she asks and replies herself, "The High Court directive delivered in May last, demanding the candidates must disclose their income, assets and liabilities, the assets and liabilities of family members, their bank loans and repayments, and sources of income, and any criminal record."

She said, "Future IDA [International Development Assistance of the WB] commitments will of course depend on country performance, the pace of economic reforms and project implementation."

Bangladesh's current problem of infrastructure does not lie in the infrastructure sectors, rather in Bangladesh's system of political governance, said the country director of.

Wallich observed the recent Investment Climate Assessment for Bangladesh identified poor quality and poorly managed infrastructure as the major deficiency in the investment climate, together with security and law and order.

Moreover, Bangladesh is denying itself access to readily available power projects by failing to address the essential role of procurement processes, she continued.

"Since 1999, some 15 power plants have been publicly tendered but only three were awarded. The procurement process followed were

Iqbal Hassan Mahmood defended himself, saying, "The Daily Star report is not an indicator for corruption. You send your men and check it yourself. Bring all your multilateral donors and tell us where we have corruption."

Then he said, "Where will you not find corruption? It is in every country."

Noting the Sirajganj 450 mw project, which was cancelled after finalisation on political reasons, Mahmood said, "The Sirajganj project was a killer for the country."

Mahmood claimed that the repeated re-tenderings of various power projects are taking place according to the guideline of the WB to maintain transparency in the tendering process.

"I think the guideline of the WB for the procurement process should be changed," the state minister said. During his recent visit to Dhaka, Paul Wolfowitz, the World Bank president, had also expressed concerns about large-scale corruption in power projects. The WB had also previously written letters to the government expressing the same concerns.

Last year the government lost a 45 million Euro German grant when the Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL), a concern of the Rural Electrification Board (REB), refused to open books for an international auditing. The Daily Star had reported a massive corruption bid in the RPCL.

The Daily Star is regularly reporting how corruption attempts have led to six terms of tendering for the 90 mw Fenchuganj bid - which ultimately went to a disqualified company - the faulty deal for the Meghnaghat 2 bid, the faulty bid handling of the Chandpur 150 mw plant and many other stories related to power projects. So far, with the exception of a couple of weak rejections, the government has not protested these reports.

questionable and non-transparent and not in the interest of good outcomes for Bangladesh," she said.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman while giving his views to the press after the workshop differed with Wallich on the question of election funding. He said, "Huge election funding is not uniquely a matter of Bangladesh. Political parties in America or Japan or Germany raise billions of dollars during national elections. Can these amounts be raised from the candidates alone?"

"This is nothing new. The World Bank president talked about corruption before. Corruption exists in every country. But in our case, they [WB] say, you are a poor country; if you misappropriate all development funds through corruption, then how will the poor get money?" Saifur told the press.

Lack of corporate governance is a major problem for the development of infrastructure in Bangladesh, Saifur admitted.

"I do not agree that we have corruption from top to bottom," Saifur said adding, "We believe corruption will come down further with the full functioning of the new institutions like Anti Corruption Commission that the current government has set up."

Saying that corruption in the country stems mainly from poverty, Iqbal Hasan Mahmood, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, said, "It's true we are poor, we are corrupt, but what about the developed countries? They are intellectually corrupt."

"A discussion should be held involving the donor agencies and the other countries to find out how much corrupt we are and how much the developed countries including America," he said.

Speaking at the workshop, Mahmudur Rahman, adviser to energy ministry, said unless the country achieves double digit industrial growth, it will be very hard to reach the target of seven percent GDP growth by 2007 and the millennium development goals.

WB Vice-president (Financial Sector Network) Cesare Calari presented the keynote paper at the workshop arranged to promote long-term finance for the development of infrastructure, including ports, power and telecoms.

Policymakers, regulators, investors, operators, bankers, and international experts are participating in the workshop, the first of its kind in Bangladesh, to discuss policy and operational issues as well as international best practices of infrastructure.

Faridpur-1

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The voting will start at 8:00am and continue till 4:00pm without any break.

A public holiday has been announced in the constituency to enable the voters to exercise franchise.

As many as 1,994 officers including 146 presiding officers, 616 assistant presiding officers, and 1,232 polling officers have been given the responsibility to conduct the polls in the constituency with 3,22,298 voters, the Election Commission sources said.

The Faridpur-1 constituency comprising Madhukhali, Boalmari and Alfadanga upazilas fell vacant after Kazi Sirajul Islam, who was elected member of parliament on Awami League ticket, joined BNP on June 4 by crossing the floor.

Besides Abu Zafar and Sharafat Hossain, another candidate in the run is Krishok Mohammad Sadek, who stands for his 43rd election, with a record of security deposit forfeiture in previous elections.

Oil surges

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sweet crude for delivery in October, touched a high of \$70.80 in Asia yesterday morning on news that Katrina was swirling dangerously close to the heart of US production and refining operations around New Orleans.

After the hurricane was down graded a notch lower from a maximum category five storm, at 5:00pm (0900 GMT) the benchmark futures contract was trading at \$69.08 a barrel, up \$2.95 from its close of \$66.13 in the US market Friday.

The price was more than double levels at the end of 2003. Share markets across Asia and the Pacific tumbled, with dealers saying the cost of crude had struck a level widely seen as a break point - at which oil costs begin eroding economic growth, weakening currencies, fuelling inflation, and pressuring central banks into raising interest rates.

Tetsu Emori, chief commodities strategist at Mitsui Bussan Futures in Tokyo, said the market will await the actual impact of the hurricane on production but he believed 70-dollar oil may not be sustainable because the US summer holidays are now drawing to a close, reducing gasoline demand.

"Seventy dollars is completely far away from the fundamentals," he told AFP. "It's quite difficult to sustain."

But Dariusz Kowalczyk, a Hong Kong-based investment strategist at CFC Seymour Securities, feared that the impact would be longer-lasting as damage to offshore oil rigs and onshore refineries would take time to repair.

Offshore production platforms have been evacuated and refineries onshore shut down ahead of Katrina, one of the most powerful Atlantic hurricanes on record.

The Louisiana port in New Orleans, which handles 11 percent of US crude imports, or one million barrels of oil a day, was on the path of the storm as were refineries in Alabama and Mississippi.

Kowalczyk compared Katrina to Hurricane Ivan which pummeled the US Gulf Coast in September last year, causing widespread damage to the region's oil production infrastructure and leading to a 22 percent rise in prices.

White prices have stabilised after breaching \$70 a barrel, "we are still in a very bullish market," he said, adding it was possible prices could even hit \$80 a barrel.

"I think it will be a more sustained move higher. There is room for significant volatility in the days ahead," he told AFP.

He pointed out that the February futures contract on the New York Mercantile Exchange has struck \$71.87 a barrel - the highest level for any contract and an indication of where the prices could go.

Gasoline prices in particular have shot up three percent from Friday's close - a worrying trend because of its direct impact on US consumers, he said.

Jewellers observe

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areas before police barred them at Tophkana Road on the way to the Jatiya Press Club.

Representatives of the traders' bodies then submitted a memorandum to home ministry stating their demands.

Meanwhile, the heist case, filed with the Gulshan Police Station by the owner of Venus Jewellers Gangacharan Malakar, was shifted to Detective Branch (DB) of police Sunday night.

Investigation Officer (IO) Inspector Sirajul Islam of DB yesterday produced 19 arrestees before the court with a 10-day remand prayer. The court granted six days.

"We arrested a few more except the guards of the market today [Monday] on suspicion," the IO told the Daily Star. "But we are yet to recover anything," he added.

Meanwhile, police suspended Sub-Inspector Rezaul Haq of Gulshan Police Station, who was in charge of the area Saturday night, for his failure to make the market secure.

Burglars heisted gold ornaments weighing about 4,000 tolas and other valuables worth about Tk 5 crore, breaking through the ceiling of the 15-storey shopping complex Saturday night.

4 Rab men

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The court also fined Tk 5,000 each, in default they will have to serve 30 more days of RI.

The complainant will be returned Tk 2,45,500 recovered from Waliullah and Tk 10,000 from Khorsheed after disposal of the appeal, if the convicts file, the court said.

Complainant Ratan Ali, who was present in the court, expressed his satisfaction over the verdict.

The convicts went to the Mirpur residence of Ratan at about 12:20pm on March 23 and identifying themselves as Rab-4 members, they robbed Tk 7.8 lakh from Ratan's house. Five of the convicts managed to escape using two CNG-run three-wheelers waiting outside but the locals held Sergeant Atiqur.