

## 7 JMB linchpins handed death in Jhalkathi

FROM PAGE 1

Hasan Al Mamun and Asadur Rahman Arif. Of them, Arif is absconding.

Additional District and Sessions Judge of Jhalakathi Reza Tarik Ahmed delivered the judgement in a crowded courtroom at 10:55 am with an unprecedented security blanket in the area.

Protesting the trial held by a 'Taguti' court and not by an Islamic jury board, the top JMB leaders who were present in the dock retorted they would make a 'befitting response' to this.

The terror don said they would not appeal against the judgement under the existing judicial system.

One of the accused, Sultan Hossain, was acquitted as the charge against him could not be proved.

Senior assistant judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohel Ahmed were killed in a suicide bomb attack at Purba Chadkati in Jhalakathi town on November 14 last year in the wake of a series of violent militant attacks across the country.

### DELIVERANCE OFVERDICT

The police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) took unprecedented security measures in Jhalakathi town from early morning. They formed a security net in a two-square kilometre area around the judge's court.

A large number of police and Rab

personnel guarded Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai, JMB chief's brother Ataur Rahman Sunny and Khaled Saifullah while they were being taken to the court at 10:40am in a special prison van from the newly set up sub jail at Jhalakathi Shilpkala Academy. Police and Rab men took Abdul Awal, also son-in-law of the JMB chief, Mamun and Sultan to the court from Jhalakathi district jail at 10:20am.

Defying orders, the accused wearing shoes walked to the first floor dock of the court. As a Rab official asked them to put off their shoes, Rahman said, "This court is unholy." They were however compelled to do so later.

Taking his seat at 10:55am, the judge read out only the main part of the judgement.

The judgement said Rahman, Bangla Bhai, Sunny, Awal, Khaled Saifullah, Mamun and Arif were found guilty under Section 120/B and 302/34 of the Code of Criminal Procedure for killing judges Sohel Ahmed and Jagannath Pandey. And the court ordered hanging them until death.

The court told the convicts that they would have seven days to appeal against the judgement and could get copy of the verdict if they wanted.

Since convict Arif is absconding, his death penalty will be executed after his arrest or surrender.

### CONVICTS UNPERTURBED, CONTINUE TO TAUNI, TEASE

When the judge said the convicts will get copy of the verdict if they want to appeal, the JMB chief said, "The government had engaged us to invite the ulama community for establishing Islamic laws. But now it punished us under worldly laws. What is the punishment this government deserves?"

Bangla Bhai and other accused were heard singing militant songs.

At the top of his voice, Rahman told the judge, "Although we asked the government for holding our trial by an Islamic jury board, it did not pay any heed. Our trial has been conducted hastily by a Taguti court. Why the government is hurrying and why it is afraid?"

Alleging that the government is running propaganda against them through radio and television engaging the ulama, he demanded an opportunity to address the people through television to "make them understand whether we've done something right or wrong".

While the convicts were coming out of the court singing, the JMB supremo said, "We've worked for the country, freedom of the people. We've not done anything illegal. We will give a befitting response to the government's actions."

Awal showed a V-sign and said the verdict came as a victory for them.

Police and Rab then took them on a

prison van and drove to the jail.

### VICTIMS' FAMILIES DEMAND QUICKEEXECUTION OFVERDICT

Jagannath Pandey's wife Pallabi Jyoti Pandey attended her office in Barisal as usual and did not go to the court to hear the judgement. She told reporters Sunday night that she felt panicked at the sight of the 'hyena'.

"The killers must be hanged in public to show that no murderer is above law," she said after the verdict, demanding its immediate execution.

"We'll never be able to overcome the loss. We'll get at least some consolation if the judgement is executed as early as possible."

She also demanded that the people who patronised and provided funds to the JMB should also be brought to trial.

Asking the government to ensure that the convicts are hanged, Sohel Ahmed's wife Kanta said: "I appeal to the government to prevent recurrence of Jhalakathi tragedy anywhere in the country."

Public Prosecutor Haider Hussain and plaintiff of the case Sultan Ahmed expressed satisfaction at the verdict.

"Those who taunted the existing judiciary as 'Taguti system' are now punished. The country will be free from these ill elements when the verdict is executed," he said.

Welcoming the judgement, Jhalakathi District Bar Association held a meeting. "We're not yet safe. All involved in the judiciary will feel safe only after the verdict is executed," said President of the Bar Shahjahan Ashraf.

### BACKGROUND

While Jagannath Pandey and Sohel Ahmed were waiting in a microbus in front of Assistant Judge Abdul Awal's house in Quarter Polli area in Jhalakathi town on November 14 last year, suicide bomber Mamun blasted the bomb.

Sohe died on the spot while Jagannath died at Barisal Medical College Hospital later. A peon of Jhalakathi judgeship, Abdul Mannan, and a pedestrian milk trader were also injured in the attack.

Suicide bomber Mamun, a member of the JMB suicide squad, was arrested from the spot with critical injuries.

Sultan, a driver of the judgeship, filed two separate cases with Jhalakathi Police Station -- one in connection with the murders and another under the Explosives Act.

On February 20, Barisal Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal awarded 40 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) to Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai, Molla Omar (killed in Rab action in Comilla) and Khaled Saifullah in the case filed under the Explosives Act.

Special ASP Munshi Atiqur Rahman of Criminal Investigation Department, who investigated the case, submitted the chargesheet with the Jhalakathi District and Sessions Judge's Court on March 21, accusing eight people.

The court framed charge on April 23 and the judgement followed examination of 45 witnesses and hearing of arguments of both the sides.

## Six get life for killing garment worker

### UNB, NARAYANGANJ

A court here Sunday sentenced six people to life imprisonment for killing a garment worker.

The lifers are Bachchu, Sohel, Iran, Zaman, Babul and Faruq.

According to the prosecution, the convicts called garment worker Mamun out of his house in Bandar area on April 21, 2002 and murdered him over previous enmity.

They also dumped the body in a nearby canal.

Mamun's father Aftabuddin filed a case and the police submitted charge sheet against them after an investigation.

After examining the witnesses and records, District and Sessions Judge Abul Mansur pronounced the verdict.