

RIGHTING THE GRIEVOUS WRONG

The Daily Star
Special

Dhaka, Thursday November 19, 2009

His life, struggle

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born on 17 March 1920 to Sheikh Lutfur Rahman and Shahara Khatun in village Tungipara under the then Gopalganj subdivision. Affectionately called Khoka by his parents, he began his school education at Gimadanga Primary School. He then moved on to Gopalganj Public School before being transferred to a

SEE PAGE 11

Sheer luck saved the sisters

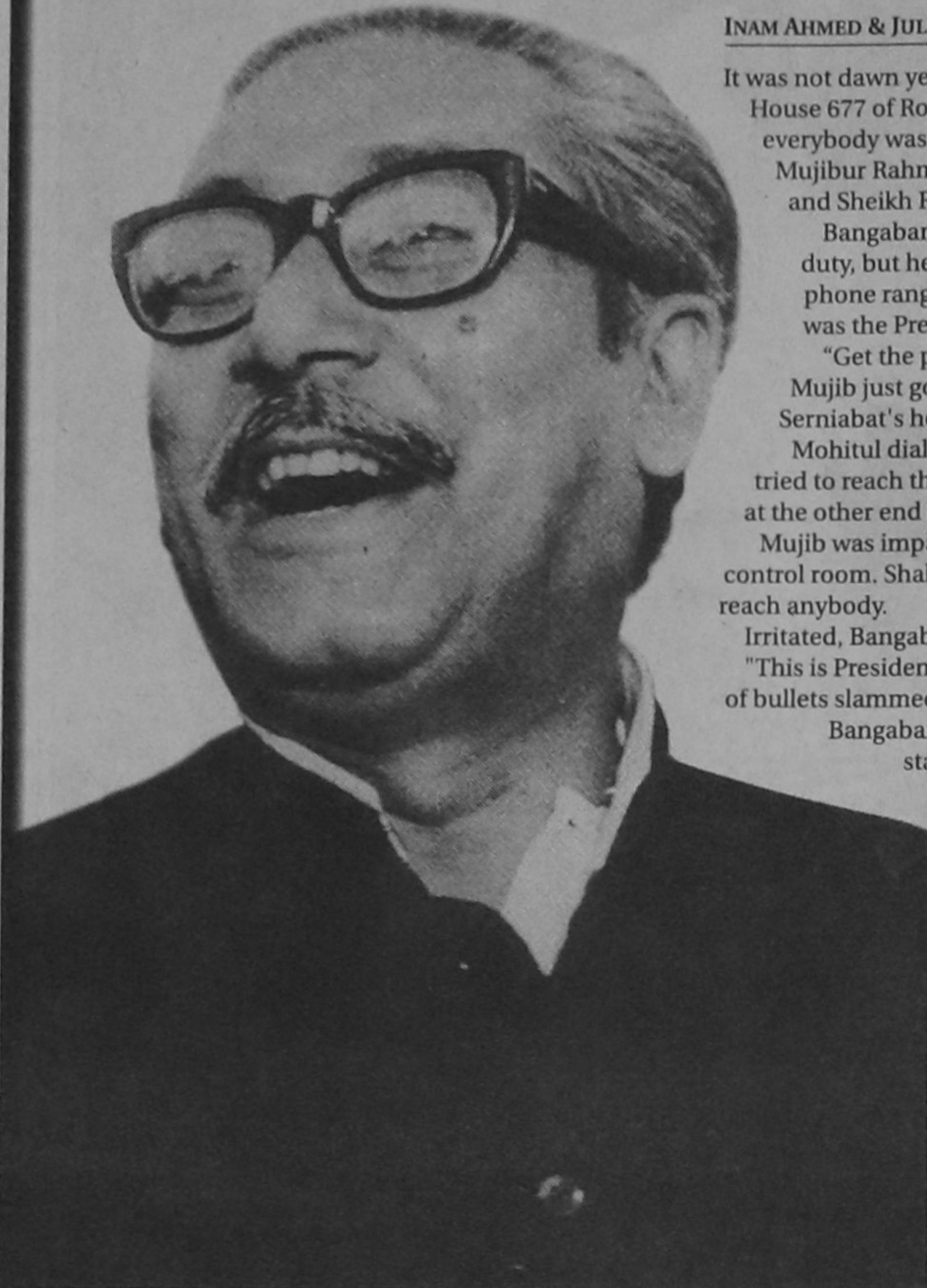
STAR REPORT

Sheikh Hasina along with her younger sister Sheikh Rehana escaped the putsch on August 15, 1975 as they were abroad at the time.

But the military backed rulers, who usurped the state power following the first bloody coup of

SEE PAGE 2

Bloodbath on Road 32



INAM AHMED & JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

It was not dawn yet. A false dawn spread its pale light across the sky. At House 677 of Road 32 in Dhanmondi, it was time to change guards while everybody was still in deep sleep: President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, wife Begum Mujib, sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russell, daughters-in-law, and brother Sheikh Naser.

Bangabandhu's personal assistant AFM Mohitul Islam was on night duty, but he hit the bed around one in the morning. Suddenly the phone rang and he sleepily picked up the receiver. At the other end was the President himself. The clock was about to strike five.

"Get the police control room," Bangabandhu ordered Mohitul. Mujib just got the message that his brother-in-law Abdur Rab Serniabat's house was under attack.

Mohitul dialled the police but the line did not get through. He then tried to reach the Ganobhaban exchange. Somebody picked up the phone at the other end but would not speak.

Mujib was impatient and asked him why he did not contact the police control room. Shakily, Mohitul gave the President the bad news -- he cannot reach anybody.

Irritated, Bangabandhu took away the telephone receiver from Mohitul. "This is President Sheikh Mujib speaking," he thundered. Just then a hail of bullets slammed Mohitul's office room and shattered the windowpanes.

Bangabandhu had little idea that the assassination mission had started. Little did he know he would not live to see the false dawn turning into a morning darker than night.

It was also in this false dawn that Havildar Md Qudus Sikder along with seven other guards were hoisting the national flag to the tune of bugle at Bangabandhu's residence. It was time for the guard changeover. Then he heard gunshots coming from the lakeside.

The guards immediately took position behind the boundary wall. They were baffled and were still looking for bullets to retaliate when some army men in black and khaki uniform thundered into the house through the gate.

"Put your hands up," they shouted at the guards. The tragedy showed its first signs.

SEE PAGE 8

Conspiracy hatched for the dark night

Farooq, Rashid talk how they conceived the coup and their preparations

INAM AHMED

It was not any quick decision to exterminate Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family by some hot-headed army officers, but a long drawn plan that was known to some top political leaders and senior army officers, as the boastful descriptions of the August 15, 1975 carnage by self-confessed killers testify.

Their descriptions of the event however differ from the witnesses on many counts as they apparently tried to shift their responsibility.

Syed Farooq Rahman and Khandaker Abdur Rashid, the two masterminds of the killings, were interviewed by famous journalist Anthony Mascarenhas on ITV. The Guardian of London also ran a story written by another journalist Lawrence Lifschultz, with interviews of the killers. The perpetrators also wrote about their well hatched plan in their book titled 'Muktir Poth' or 'The Road to Freedom'.

Farooq told Anthony that he had been thinking of assassinating Mujib back in 1974.

"I decided that he [Mujib] should go, but then in March 1974 I was until then a purely professional soldier. I did not have any political understanding and one thing I did not know, was that if you removed him what would happen, what would be the reaction. I had to talk," Farooq said. Once set on removing Mujib, the young army officers had to find someone to put in his place.

"The first obvious choice was General Zia [Ziaur Rahman,

SEE PAGE 8

34 years for justice

"It seemed the judges were avoiding responsibilities." -Justice Latifur Rahman

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

What caused the delay of as long as 34 years in holding the trial of the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman?

The incidents of August 15, 1975, constitute the darkest part in the history of Bangladesh's politics that brought for the first time the change in the country's state power through a bloodbath.

The darkness deepened further in the form of the Indemnity Ordinance, which was introduced by Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed and then given constitutional legitimacy by General Ziaur Rahman, to protect the killers of Bangabandhu and obstruct justice.

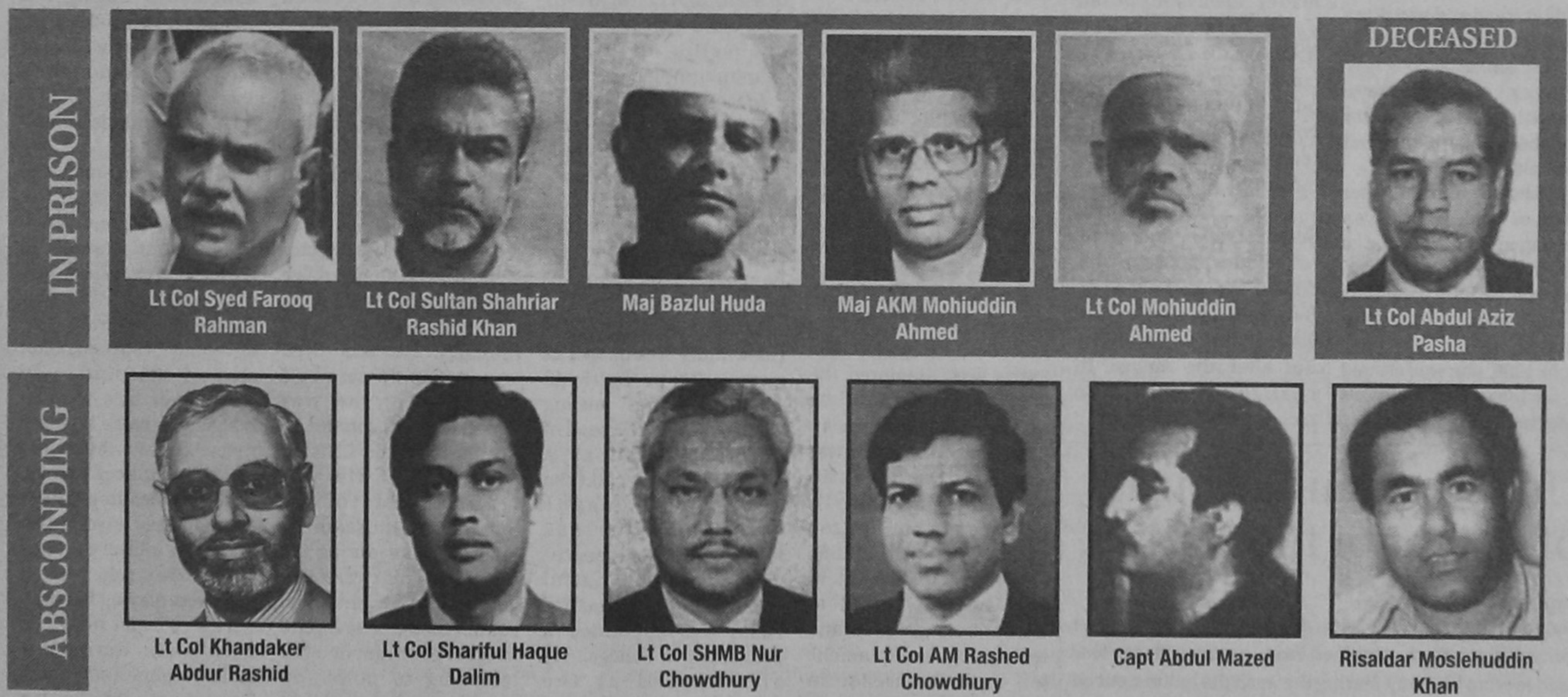
No government took initiatives to ensure justice to the killing of the country's first president until Sheikh Mujib's own party Awami League came to power in 1996 under the leadership of his daughter Sheikh Hasina.

"Thought about the security of my life and other various adversities led me to delay filing of the case regarding the incident [Bangabandhu's murder]," a note from the complainant AFM Mohitul Islam in the FIR (first information report) filed with Dhanmondi Police Station

SEE PAGE 2

CONVICTS AWAITING FINAL JUDGEMENT

Of the 15 original convicts in Bangabandhu murder case, three were later acquitted by the High court. Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, Mahubul Alam Chashi, Risaldar Sarwar Hossain, and Captain M Mostafa Ahmed were also accused in the chargesheet, but were not tried as they had already died.



OUR TRIBUTE

Today the long-awaited judgement in the Bangabandhu murder case will be announced after 34 years of the killings. On this occasion we publish a special supplement recollecting the gruesome events, the related conspiracies and the roles of some prominent actors. We publish this to remind our readers of those shameful events that so fundamentally changed the course of the nation and moved us away from the ideals of the Liberation War. The contents of the supplement are based on court documents and published materials.

-- Editor

Dark law to shield killers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Just forty-one days into the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, an indemnity ordinance was promulgated by Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, who grabbed state power immediately after the killing by putting martial law in place.

The only aim of the ordinance issued on September 26, 1975 was to block any legal or other proceedings against the killers and those who were involved in proclaiming the martial law on the morning of August 15, 1975.

The culture of impunity started in the country as well as a culture of violence surfaced in politics since legalising the killing of Bangabandhu, shielding the self-confessed killers.

"Whereas it is expedient to restrict the taking of any legal or other proceedings in respect of certain acts or things done in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or steps necessitating, the

SEE PAGE 2

Rewards for slayers

REZAUL KARIM

After the most gruesome political assassinations in the history of Bangladesh, perpetrated on August 15 and November 3 of 1975, in which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with most of his family members, and four national leaders were killed by disgruntled army officers, the killer majors and colonels were allowed free passage to Bangkok by a special plane.

The getaway was arranged by the then president, Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, immediately after the jail killing of the four national leaders on November 3. Among the prominent killers who had

led both the killings and fled the country were Lieutenant Colonels Syed Farooq Rahman, Khandaker Abdur Rashid, and Shariful Haque Dalim.

Ziaur Rahman rewarded 12 army officers involved in the Bangabandhu killing with diplomatic jobs at Bangladesh missions abroad in 1976

Farooq and Rashid declined to accept any diplomatic assignment.

Subsequent military ruler HM Ershad, who came to power through a military

Assuming power through the November 7, 1975 regime change, former president late Lt Gen Ziaur Rahman rewarded 12 army officials involved in the Bangabandhu killing with diplomatic jobs at Bangladesh missions abroad in 1976.

They were incorporated in the foreign service in September 1980. Only

SEE PAGE 2

Where are they ?

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Six of the 12 convicted killers of Bangabandhu have been holed up in Libya, US, Canada, Pakistan and Kenya, one died in Zimbabwe, and the remaining five are behind bars at home.

Sources in the administration and intelligence agencies said some of the killers on the run travel to different countries for business purposes.

The government is working to have them extradited or deported back home with the apex court set to deliver its verdict in the historic murder case today.

Through intelligence sources, the government has gathered information about the whereabouts of those still at large. It is however maintaining absolute secrecy about the matter.

After Awami League came to power in 1996, it formed a taskforce to initiate moves to sign extradition treaties with different countries to bring back the murder convicts.

Former ambassador Wali-ur Rehman, who headed the taskforce-turned-cell till 1998, said that soon after taking office, the previous AL government cancelled diplomatic

SEE PAGE 2