



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is greeted by UK House of Commons Speaker John Bercow, right, as she reaches the British parliament to attend a reception programme yesterday. Labour MP Tulip Siddiq, also Hasina's niece, was with the premier who is on a six-day tour to the United Kingdom.

PHOTO: PMO

PM pledges to build poverty-free country

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her vision is to turn Bangladesh into a poverty-free country imbued with the ideology of democracy and secularism.

Addressing a reception at Westminster in London yesterday, she said her country was following Westminster-style of democracy and had been working hard on strengthening its democratic institutions.

Talking about secularism, Hasina said people from all religious faiths have the freedom to practice the rituals of their religions, and that was enshrined in Bangladesh's constitution.

Some 30 British MPs, including Rushanara Ali, Tulip Siddiq and Rupa Huq, attended the reception hosted by British Labour Party politician Keith Vaz, said a press release of Bangladesh High Commission in London.

Hasina recollected with gratitude the British support for Bangladesh during its tumultuous birth and in her fight to establish democracy in the country.

She also recalled how the British MPs stood by her during the 2007-2008 tenure of a caretaker government, which had refused to let her enter

Bangladesh.

But when the international and local pressure mounted, she had returned home and forced the government to hold parliamentary elections, the PM told the reception.

In his welcome address, Keith Vaz praised Hasina for her courageous work to establish a strong Bangladesh and said it was a great honour to have her at the programme.

PM's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wajed Joy, who was specially invited to speak at the event, said Bangladesh made great strides in the IT sector with villages now stay connected through internet.

Anne Maine, an MP of the Conservative Party, also spoke about the age-old friendship between the two countries.

SC upholds verdict

FROM PAGE 1 confirmed by the apex court. Mojaheed is also the first war crimes convict facing gallows for the killing of intellectuals and professionals.

The top court also upheld his life sentence for killing composer Altaf Mahmud, Jahir Uddin Jalal, Badi, Rumi (son of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam), Jewel and Azad at the Old MP Hostel at Nakhla para in Dhaka and his five years' jail term for confining and torturing Ranjit Nath, a civilian, at a Bihari camp in Faridpur.

Mojaheed can now file a review petition and if it is rejected, he can seek presidential clemency as a last option to save his life.

On July 17, 2013, the International Crimes Tribunal-2 found Mojaheed guilty of abducting and killing journalist Serajuddin Hossain. But the court did not give any separate sentence for this, as the offence was merged with those of the killings of intellectuals and professionals, for which the tribunal awarded him the death penalty.

The charge concerning the killing of intellectuals says the Pakistan army set up a camp at Mohammadpur Physical Training Institute in Dhaka where members of Razakar and Al-Badr forces used to train.

In 1971, Mojaheed was president of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami. After the war broke, the Chhatra Sangha started operating as Al-Badr, the "death squad" of the Pakistan army, the tribunal said.

Mojaheed challenged the tribunal verdict with the SC on August 11, 2013, seeking acquittal on all the five charges

against him. The SC concluded hearing of the appeal on May 27 this year.

Yesterday, a four-member SC bench headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha came up with the short verdict, allowing Mojaheed's appeal in part.

The bench acquitted the Jamaat leader on the charge of abducting and killing journalist Serajuddin Hossain but found him guilty of killing intellectuals and

observers were present in the court. Mojaheed's three sons were also there.

The SC did not clarify the grounds of its sentence. It will be clear once the full text of the judgment is released.

The 67-year-old convict was in Dhaka Central Jail when the court pronounced the verdict. Normally, the accused are not produced before the appeal court.

Jamaat expressed disappointment at

reporters.

Usually, a review appeal is entertained for consideration in case of serious factual mistakes in the verdict or wrongful application of the law, legal experts say.

Mahbubey Alam said the Al-Badr force killed intellectuals, including Dhaka University teachers, eminent physicians and journalists in a pre-

tion has miserably failed to produce any credible eyewitness to show that Mojaheed was directly involved in commission of offences in 1971," he added.

Mojaheed's son Ali Ahmed Mabrus said, "We did not get justice at the tribunal. We had hoped justice will be done by the Supreme Court but we have been deprived here as well. We are aggrieved."

Mojaheed, who was made a technocrat minister during the BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance rule in 2001-2006, came under huge criticism for his audacious comment in 2007 that there were no war criminals in the country.

Also an accused in the sensational August 21 grenade attack case, he was arrested in June 2010 in a case filed for hurting religious sentiment of people. He was shown arrested in a war crimes case in August the same year.

In the three previous war crimes verdicts, the SC handed the death penalty to Abdul Quader Mollah, upheld the death sentence of Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and commuted the maximum punishment of Delwar Hossain Sayedee to imprisonment till death.

Kamaruzzaman was executed on April 11 this year and Quader Mollah on December 12, 2013.

Eight more appeals are now pending before the top court.

The appellants are BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and party leaders Mir Quasem Ali, AIM Azharul Islam and Abdus Subhan, expelled Awami League leader of Brahmanbaria

CRIMES	TRIBUNAL VERDICT	SC VERDICT
1. Killing of Serajuddin Hossain	Guilty, merged with charge 6	NOT GUILTY
2. Genocide in three Hindu villages of Faridpur	Not guilty	
3. Confinement, torture of Ranjit	5-year jail	5-YEAR JAIL
4. Confinement, torture of Yusuf	Not guilty	
5. Killing of Altaf Mahmud, Rumi and others	Life term	LIFE TERM
6. Killing of intellectuals	Death	DEATH
7. Mass killing in Bakchar of Faridpur	Death	LIFE TERM

professionals and upheld the death sentence given by the tribunal.

The three other judges are Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Hasan Foez Siddique.

Also for the first time in a war crimes case, the SC returned the verdict unanimously. All the three previous appeals that the SC heard saw dissenting verdicts.

Chief Justice SK Sinha delivered the short verdict in a packed courtroom around 9:05am amid tight security in and around the court area.

A few hundred people, including lawyers, journalists, justice-seekers and

the judgment and called a 24-hour hartal starting 6:00am today, demanding the release of Mojaheed and all other party leaders and activists.

State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told reporters in Rajshahi that the government would implement the SC verdict on completion of all legal procedures.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said the process for executing Mojaheed would start after the release of the full verdict.

But the process will be halted if he files a review petition, which he must do within 15 days from the date of the release of the verdict, the AG told

planned way just days before the Pakistan army surrendered to the allied forces. The plan was aimed at eliminating all the brightest minds of the soil.

"There is no country in the world where intellectuals were killed by their fellowmen, the attorney general said.

During the war, Mojaheed delivered provocative speeches saying books written by Hindu people would not be kept in any public library. He also instigated the Al-Badr force to kill intellectuals, he added.

Defence lawyer Shishir Manir told The Daily Star that Mojaheed would seek a review.

"I am of the view that the prosecu-

Bakhtiar denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected the bail petition of Bakhtiar Alam Rony, son of ruling party lawmaker Pinu Khan, in a case filed in connection with the shooting and killing of two people on April 14.

Metropolitan Magistrate Aminul Haque rejected the petition following DMP Assistant Commissioner Mirash Uddin's plea that if Bakhtiar was freed on bail, he might try to influence the case, court sources said.

He would also try to change the course of the police probe, court sources quoted the police official as saying.

Defence lawyer Shawkat Osman, however, said his client's name had been implicated in the case falsely.

He said Bakhtiar's name was not in the first information report, and that the plaintiff also did not suspect his involvement. The case was filed to harass him.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday reiterated that actions would be taken against Bakhtiar as per the law if he was found guilty, irrespective of his political identity.

"It will not be considered if the person involved is the son of an MP, minister, wealthy or influential person," he told journalists after a programme in Rajshahi.

Bakhtiar allegedly shot from his licensed pistol four to five times from a black Toyota Prado, killing CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver Yakub Ali and rickshaw-puller Abdul Hakim.

Justice on the horizon

FROM PAGE 1 against humanity has started despite long delay, we must wait patiently for the trial of Jamaat-e-Islami."

Nuzhat Chowdhury Shampa, daughter of martyred physician Dr Alim Chowdhury, noted that the verdicts the SC delivered on three previous appeals did not have a direct link with the pro-liberation intellectuals.

"It is the first Appellate Division verdict which has given death penalty to a war criminal for the killing of intellectuals."

"Their conspiracy of killing intellectual visionaries of the country is still continuing. Therefore, it is more important to try the criminals involved in killing intellectuals in 1971, so that we can uproot the conspiracy as a whole," she said.

"As a daughter of a martyr I would like to bring it to the attention of our policy makers that if we do not try Jamaat-e-Islam and stop the ideological spread of this party and other like-minded extremist groups and break their financial and economic strongholds, I believe that our fight against



Shaon Mahmud

the war criminals will be futile," she opined.

"It will rather only create the ground for the re-emergence of a stronger and more violent form of these extremists that will surely lead to another bloodbath in the future someday," Nuzhat stressed.

Shumon Zahid, son of martyred intellectual journalist Selina Parvin, said his family would be fully assured when the sentence was executed.

He said many members of the intellectuals' families could not see the war crimes trial taking place while they were alive.

But he wishes to see that punishment is being meted out during his



Shumon Zahid

lifetime. "So that we can tell our children that we received justice," he said.

Shumon opined that banning Jamaat-e-Islami "is a political decision" and noted that the party, which had committed despicable atrocities in 1971, even burned people to death to mar the trial process.

"As we learn from newspapers and other sources, no party which opposes a nation's independence is allowed to do politics in that country," he said.

Shahriar Kabir, cousin of martyred writer Prof Shahidullah Kaiser and writer and filmmaker Zahir Raihan, said, "Justice can be delayed but at the end of the day the truth will prevail."



Nuzhat Chowdhury



Shahriar Kabir

Kabir, a journalist and researcher who was the first prosecution witness of Mojaheed's trial, said all the crimes committed by the Al-Badr was well documented in Jamaat's own publication in Selim Mansur Khalid's book 'Al-Badr', which was submitted to the court.

Shahriar criticised the law ministry for dilly-dallying with starting the trial of Jamaat-e-Islami and other organisations involved in war crimes.

"All the investigation has been done. But they have stalled the process saying that the punishment for organisations should be included in the law," Shahriar said.

"Why should it take one and half

SC hearing on SQ Chy's appeal begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday started hearing on the appeal filed against the death penalty awarded to war criminal and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury.

A four-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha began hearing proceedings around 10:45am.

Salauddin's lawyer SM Shahjahan read out to the SC the charges brought against the BNP leader before the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Earlier in the day, the apex court rejected a petition, filed by Salauddin, seeking a four-week adjournment of the appeal hearing.

In the petition, the BNP leader mentioned that lawyers needed time to produce the copies of orders passed



by the ICT-1 on different days during trial proceedings of the case against him.

On October 1, 2013, the ICT-1 found Salauddin guilty of nine of the 23 charges brought against him for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War

in 1971. The tribunal handed him the death penalty on four charges, 20 years in jail for three charges and five years in jail for two other charges.

Salauddin was the only sitting member of parliament to have been convicted of war crimes and condemned to hang.

On October 29, 2013, the BNP leader appealed to the apex court against the verdict seeking his acquittal of all charges.

The SC yesterday fixed today for resuming the hearing.

Internet keeps Jamaat alive

FROM PAGE 1 for Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed for his 1971 crimes, are made public through online means.

Holed up to avoid arrest, they are using online messaging and other communications applications to hold "virtual" meetings among themselves and take vital decisions.

Viber, Skype, Tango and Google Hangouts are their favourites, party insiders said.

The Jamaat top leaders converse among themselves through the apps and then convey their decisions and necessary instructions to a "communi-

cation cell", which passes them on to the district-level leaders. These leaders then relay the messages down the chain of command.

After the party's normal ways of communications broke down following the arrest of its top leaders in connection with war crimes charges, an eight-member team of Jamaat now takes the key decisions.

With Jamaat's acting chief Maqbul Ahmad at the helm, the team consists of Majibur Rahman, Rafiqul Islam Khan, Hamidur Rahman Azad, Abdullah Mohammad Taher, Nurul Islam Bulbul, Abdul Halim, and Shafiqur Rahman -- all members of

the central executive committee, the highest policy-making body of the party.

The decisions taken by these leaders are circulated to the media in the form of press releases or statements through emails and uploaded on the party website by the so-called communication cell.

The media handouts do not carry the signatures of any top leader. Some barely-known members of the Central Publicity Wing usually sign them.

Yesterday's statement regarding enforcing the 24-hour hartal from this morning was issued in the same

process as described above. It bore the signature of one M Alam of the Central Publicity Wing, Jamaat insiders said.

Sometimes, the grassroots leaders are informed of the central decisions or instructions through mobile phones, according to the sources.

However, the communication remains one-way, meaning that the numbers are used only for outgoing calls. The grassroots leaders cannot reach the central leaders on those numbers if they call back.

The numbers are frequently changed to dodge tracking by intelligence agencies, they told The Daily Star.

AL hails verdict

BNP silent, as usual

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League yesterday hailed the Supreme Court verdict upholding the death penalty for Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed on war crime charges, but the BNP, as usual, kept mum.

Talking to reporters at his Karwan Bazar business office, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the nation finally got the "long overdue and expected" verdict.

He hoped the verdict would be

executed soon.

Dhaka City AL and Chhatra League brought out several processions in the capital to celebrate the SC verdict.

However, the BNP, like on the occasions of other war crimes verdicts, did not make any comment yesterday either.

Standing Committee Member ASM Hannan Shah of the BNP, a key ally of Jamaat, declined to comment when reporters sought his reaction to the judgment. He was coming out of a programme at Dhaka Reporter's Unity.