

"We think that the verdict is politically motivated. It is a naked manifestation of the efforts to satisfy the government's political vengeance."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR, REJECTING THE VERDICT

"Nearly 1,800 splinters riddled my body that day. I have become a living corpse ... I want implementation of the verdict."
MAHBUBA PARVIN, A SURVIVOR OF THE AUGUST 21 BLAST

"I am satisfied but not fully pleased as Tarique Rahman was not given the death penalty."
JOJ MIA, WHO WAS FALSELY IMPLICATED IN THE GRENADE ATTACK



AUGUST 21 ATTACK

'State-backed crime' punished

Babar, 18 others to walk gallows; Tarique, 18 others given life term; appeal within 30 days



Tarique Rahman



Lutfozzaman Babar



Haris Chowdhury



Abdus Salam Pintu



Abdur Rahim



Rezzaqul Haider

SHAKHAWAT LITON, CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER, WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

It was a well-orchestrated plan, executed through abuse of state power, a special court has ruled, delivering verdicts in the two cases filed over the grenade attack on an Awami League rally 14 years ago.

And all the accused, including BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman and former top intelligence officials, were found guilty and handed down various punishments for the bombing that killed 24 people and injured scores.

In the murder case, Tarique and 18 others were sentenced to life in prison while former

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A CLOSE SHAVE

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and WASIM BIN HABIB

The day before August 21, 2004, Dhaka city Awami League leaders had an informal meeting with party chief Sheikh Hasina for her directives on the next day's rally on Bangabandhu Avenue.

At the end of the meeting, Hasina, in a

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Bodies lay scattered in pools of blood on Bangabandhu Avenue moments after explosions and gunshots rocked the venue of an Awami League rally 14 years ago. The grisly attack killed 24 and injured scores more.

PHOTO: FILE

TIMELINE

AUGUST 21, 2004
Grenade attack

AUGUST 22, 2004
Case filed

JUNE 11, 2008
CID submitted charge sheet against 22

OCTOBER 29, 2008
Court framed charges against the 22

AUGUST 12, 2009
Court ordered further investigation

JULY 3, 2011
CID submitted supplementary charge sheet against 30 more individuals, including Tarique and Babar

MARCH 18, 2012
Court framed fresh charges against the 30, taking the number of accused to 52

MARCH 27, 2012
Re-trial began

SEPTEMBER 18, 2018
Trial completed



Former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar talks to BNP leader Tarique Rahman at a BNP rally at Paltan Maidan on December 21, 2005, more than a year after the grenade attack.

PHOTO: FILE

Crown to crime

A choice brought heir apparent to BNP down to gutter

INAM AHMED and SHAKHAWAT LITON

He was hardly known to outsiders until his father, General Ziaur Rahman who became Bangladesh's president in the process of several coups and counter-coups, died in another military putsch in May 1981.

For the first time, through a Bangladesh Television programme "Jodi Kichhu Money Na Koren", the countrymen came to know Zia had two sons and one of them

Tarique Rahman. For one reason or another, the general did not expose his family to much public interactions.

Tarique grew up in the shadow of his mother Khaleda Zia and was hardly visible until 2001 when the country was heading for another election, a routinely tense time for the two main power contenders -- the Awami League and BNP.

The Awami League was in power then and the BNP

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“Does politics mean carrying out a heinous attack on an opposition party? [It was] not a mere attack; it was an attempt to make a party leaderless.”

“Does politics mean carrying out a heinous attack on an opposition party? [It was] not a mere attack; it was an attempt to make a party leaderless.”

SPEEDY TRIAL TRIBUNAL-1 JUDGE SHAHED NURUDDIN

A bid to make AL leaderless

Court observes about Aug 21 attack

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER, WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Rivalry between the ruling and the opposition parties is inevitable in politics, but it is utterly unacceptable that attempts will be made to make the opposition leaderless, a special court observed in its verdict in the August 21 grenade attack cases yesterday.

"In a democratic state, whichever party comes to power, it has to try its best to establish democracy by applying a liberal policy towards the opposition party," said Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 Judge Shahed Nuruddin.

But a ruling party's attempt to reap political benefits by killing opposition leaders cannot be a manifestation of democratic thoughts, he said.

"General people don't want such politics," said the judge as he pronounced the judgment in the two cases over the grisly

grenade attack on an Awami League rally on August 21, 2004.

The court sentenced former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and 18 others to death for their roles in the grenade attack that killed 24 people and injured scores. Acting BNP chairperson Tarique Rahman, along with 18 others, was jailed for life.

The attack, one of the most shocking political crimes in the country's history, has had a deep impact on the country's politics and widened the political division further.

In its verdict, the court talked about the country's political atmosphere since the 1971 Liberation War.

It said the defeated forces of 1971 attempted to diminish the spirit of the war and halt development of the newly independent

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REACTIONS

AL not fully satisfied

It isn't unhappy either

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League yesterday said it was neither unhappy nor fully satisfied with the verdicts in the grenade attack cases and that it would request the government to seek a stricter punishment for BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

Giving his instant reaction to the verdicts, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, "We are not unhappy and also not fully satisfied with the verdicts in the August 21 grenade attack cases as the mastermind of the gruesome attack, BNP acting vice chairman Tarique Rahman, has not been handed capital punishment."

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Verdicts at the behest of govt

Says BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday rejected the verdicts in the August 21 grenade attack cases alleging that those were delivered at the "behest of the government with a political motive".

"We think the verdicts are politically motivated. It is a clear manifestation of the government's political vengeance," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told journalists at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters.

He said the government has set another "bad example of taking political revenge by using the judiciary".

Referring to jailing of BNP Senior Vice

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'Key plotter' gets off lightly, victims feel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Survivors and family members of the victims of the August 21 grenade attack said they were saddened that the court fell short of giving capital punishment to Tarique Rahman, who was convicted of conspiring and planning the carnage.

"I waited for this verdict for 14 years. But I am not fully satisfied because Tarique, the mastermind behind it, has not been given death penalty," said Mahbuba Parvin, who suffered life changing injuries in the attack on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in 2004.

"Nearly 1,800 splinters riddled my body that day. I have become a living corpse," the grieving woman told The Daily Star.

Mahbuba said she wanted the implementation of the verdicts.

She was the women affairs secretary of Dhaka City

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Rashida Akter, who survived the attack but suffered life-changing injuries, breaks down in tears as she speaks to reporters yesterday afternoon on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Grenades came from Pakistan

RASHIDUL HASAN

The grenades used in the August 21 attack to kill Sheikh Hasina were supplied by former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu's brother Maulana Tajuddin.

Tajuddin got those from Abu Yusuf Butt alias Abdul Majed Butt, a leader of the Pakistan-based militant outfit Hijbul Mujahidin, which is active in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

In a confessional statement before the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1, Dhaka, in 2009, Majed said the grenades used during the attack came from Pakistan.

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