

# Huge marlin

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The fishermen salvaged what they could, removing the outriggers, planks and barrels to create a makeshift raft.

"Our water ran out after two days. We waved at passing commercial vessels but no one came to rescue us. But we did not lose hope," the 42-year-old father of one said, adding the crew also ate raw rice and drank some seawater.

"When we were rescued, that was when our tears fell," said Batiller, who has since been reunited with his family in Subic, a port about 80 kilometres (50 miles) northwest of Manila.

The US Navy said the men were lucky to survive, especially given the crew said they had drunk seawater.

"On average, death results two to three days after a diet of drinking undiluted sea water or urine in survival-at-sea events as it takes more water than is consumed for the body to process the waste and salt out of the kidneys," Leon Hadley, the civilian chief mate from the ship which conducted the rescue, the USNS Wally Schirra, said.

"Luckily, we were going at a slow enough speed to have spotted the fishermen," the Wally Schirra's master Keith Sauls added.

# 'Titli' aims

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Launches, ferries and speedboats would remain halted on all waterways throughout the country until further notice.

He said the decision was taken as Titli had intensified into a severe cyclonic storm over the West-Central Bay and its adjoining areas.

On the other hand, Chattogram district administration asked a 100 families living at foot of the hills to relocate, fearing landslide following daylong rainfall caused by cyclone Titli.

Md Elias Hossen, deputy secretary of Chattogram district administration, said they engaged four teams, led by the executive magistrate, to relocate those who were exposed to landslides, adding that at least 100 families have moved from hills, including Motijorna, Batali Hill, AK Khan area and Pahartoli.

Most of the families had taken refuge at their relative's house and others at shelter homes, he said, adding that Shahidnagar City Corporation High School made temporary shelter for people.

In Dhaka and some other parts of the country, the cyclone has caused clusters of clouds in the sky.

The Indian Met Office said Titli may change its course a little and move towards West Bengal after making landfall and would gradually weaken.

# 'Key plotter'

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Swechchhasebak League. Her photo appeared on many newspapers after the attack.

She was pictured lying among the corpses on Bangabandhu Avenue in a blood-stained golden-silk sari, with a black handbag on her bosom.

At least 24 people, including veteran AL leader Ivy Rahman, were killed and several hundred others injured in the attack.

Then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped with injuries to her ear as party leaders formed a human shield around her.

Yesterday, the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 in Dhaka awarded former state minister Lutfozzaman Babar and 18 others death sentences and Tarique and 18 others life imprisonment.

The main planner Tarique Rahman was supposed to get a death sentence. As an injured survivor, I am aggrieved," said Nazib Ahmed, a cousin of Hasina, who was among those who created a human shield to save her.

"It was a state-sponsored killing. As then state minister for home, Babar was proven guilty and awarded death penalty. Then prime minister Khaleda Zia, who was in charge of the home and other ministers, should have been accused in the case," he said.

Rashida Akhter Ruma, another survivor with over 700 splinters in her body, asked, "How come Tarique Rahman gets life term when Babar, who worked at the behest of Tarique, gets death sentence?"

Those who died that day are relieved of the pain we are going through. The pain has increased hearing Tarique's lenient punishment."

Humayun Kabir, elder brother of Abdul Quddus Patwari who died at the scene that day, said he was angry.

"After her long wait for justice, my mother died four years ago. The departed souls of my brother and mother would not rest in peace without the highest punishment of Tarique Rahman."

"WE WILL APPEAL"

Shirin Rahim, wife of then director general of the National Security Intelligence Brig Gen (retd) Abdur Rahim.

Rahim was given death sentence along with the 18 others.

After the verdict, Shirin said her husband was innocent.

Shirin said she would appeal to the High Court against the verdict.

# Ruckus, outage

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Apart from them, the place was teeming with lawyers and law enforcers.

As the clock struck 10:00am, the lawyers entered the building. But trouble began when journalists tried to follow them in. The police did not allow them entry and soon an argument ensued, after which police allowed entry to one reporter from each media outlet as per a list they had prepared.

The problems did not stop there. The reporters who were allowed entry were then told by police that they would not be allowed inside the courtroom but could stay on the premises.

The newsmen were informed that they would have to hear the verdict through a loudspeaker set up outside the building, a decision to which they expressed opposition.

Given the circumstances, the gathered journalists decided not to cover the verdict. They then spoke to Special Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kajol, who said he would take care of the problem.

Around 11:20am, a microbus arrived carrying the accused. After exiting the vehicle, they were led up the stairs to confront their fates. Afterwards, the journalists were asked to go up the stairs to the first floor of the building as the court was about to take seat.

However, once upstairs, they found more policemen blocking the entrance to the courtroom. The law enforcers asked the journalists to stand in the corridor and view the proceedings through the doorway. This kicked up another round of noisy arguments.

After a while, the police relented and the journalists were finally allowed into the courtroom, which, by then, was packed with lawyers.

This was not to be the end of the hassles.

Few minutes after the court sat at 11:40am, the electricity connection in the building went out.

The proceedings were not halted though. Amid the darkness, the prosecution gave its opening argument after which the judge delivered the introductory speech.

As the judge opened the file of the verdict at 11:48am, a court staffer shone the light from a mobile phone on the file so the judge could read it.

The faint glow was not enough so a police official gave his mobile phone, which had relatively better lighting.

The judge used the light and kept

# Whose order

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separately on the 3km stretch of the Dhaka-Aricha highway from Arpara to the Paturia ghat.

Abid Hasan, who was going to Kushtia, said his bus reached the Paturia ghat around 12:00am, but they could not board a ferry until 12:30pm.

Sufia Akter, who was heading for Khulna in a bus, said she and her two minor children were facing serious problems as they had no food and there was a shortage of toilets.

Sonia Akter, who was travelling on a Jhenidah-bound bus, said the government should not stop ferry service in the name of maintaining law and order ahead of delivering the verdicts in the August 21 grenade attack cases.

Truck driver Ramzan Ali said he arrived at the Paturia ghat around 1:00am, but could not get on a ferry until 12:30pm, he said, adding that nobody knew why the operation of big ferries was stopped.

Shafiqul Islam, manager (commerce) of BIWTC at Daulatdia office in Rajbari, said around 250 vehicles, including 150 goods-laden trucks, had to wait at Daulatdia ghat to board ferries around 12:30pm. However, the situation became normal after evening, he said.

# Newborn baby

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a general diary with Rangpur Kotwali Police Station after the hospital staffers failed to find the missing infant despite a frantic search.

Shamim Ahmed, a surgeon at the paediatrics department, is heading a committee assigned to probe the incident and submit a report within seven working days.

Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said police had collected the CCTV footage from the hospital to track down the perpetrators.

He added that a woman was detained for questioning in connection with the incident but did not divulge her identity.

# 4 Bangladeshis

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inside the building. Three died on the spot and the other after hospitalisation, he quoted the hospital officials as saying.

From the embassy, we also visited the spot. The Bahrain government is trying to arrange a shelter for the migrants," the official said.

He added that Bangladesh embassy is arranging temporary shelter and food for the affected Bangladeshis.

# 'State-backed crime'

FROM PAGE 1

state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and 18 others were given death penalty on charges of killing through criminal conspiracy.

All of these 38 accused were also sentenced to life term imprisonment for causing grievous injuries to the survivors.

The special court also found Tarique, Babar and 36 others guilty in the case filed under the explosives substance act and handed down punishments ranging from death sentence to 20 years in prison.

The conviction of these once influential politicians, former top officials of police, DGFI, NSI, CID and top Huji militants exposes the meticulously devised plan and abuse of state machinery to not only carry out the attack, but also to mislead the investigation.

The latest conviction of Tarique, which comes just months before the national election, is likely to deal a heavy blow to the BNP.

In February this year, Tarique and his mother Khaleda Zia were sentenced to 10 years in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. Khaleda is in jail since February 8 in this case, and is struggling to secure bail.

Tarique, who has been living in London since September 2008, was also sentenced to seven years in jail in a money laundering case in 2016.

With Khaleda in jail, he is now acting as the BNP chief.

Yesterday's verdicts, pronounced in a packed courtroom amid tight security, highlighted the abuse of the state power to carry out the attack on the afternoon of August 21, 2004, on Bangabandhu Avenue.

"The specialised deadly Arges grenades that are used in wars were blasted at the Awami League's central office on 23 Bangabandhu Avenue in broad daylight with the help of the then state machinery," said Judge Shahed Nuruddin of Speedy Trial Branch-1.

"The prosecution has been able to prove that the accused held meetings to conspire in different places before the incident and blasted grenades in a planned manner," he said.

After the assassination of the Father of the Nation on August 15, 1975, four national leaders were murdered inside the jail as part of a conspiracy. But the conspiracy did not stop there, it rather continued, the court noted.

"Later, an evil effort was made to make the Awami League leaderless on August 21, 2004."

Quoting the testimony of prosecution witness Abdur Rashid, who was junior vice president of Al-Markazul Islami Bangladesh, the court said accused Sheikh Farid, Hannan, Abu Taher, Tajuddin and the witness himself went to Hawa Bhaban, known to be the alternative centre of power, in Banani in mid-August of 2004 on a microbus.

A little later Tarique showed up there, reads the judgment.

In his confessional statement, Hannan also said they went to Hawa Bhaban on a microbus of Al-Markazul Islami Bangladesh and met Tarique, Haris, Babar, Mojahed, Rezzakul and Rahim there.

They were assured of all kinds of administrative support in the meeting when Tarique told them to carry out the plan and be in touch with Babar and Pintu, according to the verdict.

The prime target of the attack was AL President Sheikh Hasina, then opposition leader. But Hasina, now the prime minister, narrowly survived as some of her party leaders protected her by forming a human shield around her. She, however, suffered injuries to her ear.

## CHARGES AND PUNISHMENTS

Then state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, former deputy

minister for education Abdus Salam Pintu, former director of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Brig Gen (retd) Rezaqul Haider, former DG of National Security Intelligence (NSI) Brig Gen (retd) Abdur Rahim and 15 others were found guilty on charges of killing through common intention, planning and criminal conspiracy. They were each sentenced to death and fined Tk 1 lakh.

On the same charges, Tarique, Abul Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to the then prime minister Khaleda Zia; Kazi Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad, a BNP lawmaker at the time; and 16 others were given life terms. They were also fined Tk 50,000 each. If they fail to pay the fine, the convicts will have to serve an additional year in jail.

Tarique, Babar and 36 others, who were given either death penalty or life term, have also been found guilty of other charges. Each of them was sentenced to life imprisonment for causing grievous injuries through common intention, planning and criminal conspiracy. They were also fined Tk 50,000 each over these charges.

In the explosives case, Babar and 18 others, who were given death penalty in the murder case, were also found guilty of killing by throwing and exploding grenades and abetting in committing the offences. Each of them was given death sentence in this case as well and fined Tk 1 lakh.

For the same offence, Tarique and 18 others, who got life term in the murder case, have been convicted and sentenced to life in prison. Each of them was also fined Tk 50,000.

Also in the explosives case, Tarique, Babar and 36 other accused were found guilty of grievously injuring victims through common intention, planning and criminal conspiracy. Each of them was sentenced to jail for 20 years with a fine of Tk 50,000.

## OTHER CONVICTS IN THE KILLING CASE

Former Inspectors General of Police (IGP) Ashraful Huda and Shahul Haque were sentenced to two years in jail and fined Tk 50,000 for harbouring the offenders. They will have to serve six months more in prison if they fail to pay.

The court handed down the same punishment to the two former top cops for protecting the offenders.

Lt Commander (retd) Saiful Islam Duke, also nephew of Khaleda; Saiful Islam Joarder, former DGFI official (sacked); and Maj Gen (retd) ATM Amin, former top DGFI official, were also given four years in jail in two counts - two years for each -- for harbouring and protecting the offenders.

Another former IGP Khoda Baksh, SP of CID Ruhul Amin and ASPs of CID Abdur Rashid and Munshi Atikur Rahman were found guilty of misleading the investigation and cooking up the "Joj Mia" story. They too were sentenced to two years in jail each.

They were also sentenced to three years in prison for failing to investigate the attack properly.

All convicts will serve their jail terms concurrently.

The convicts were given a month to appeal. The jail term of the fugitives will start from the day of their arrest or surrender.

## THE ATTACK AND THE AFTERMATH

Hasina was the last speaker of the rally, which was organised, among other things, to protest against violence and terrorism.

As soon she ended her speech and posed for photos at the requests of journalists, grenades started raining down all around.

A day after the attack, police filed a case with Motijheel Police Station against unnamed people.

A few months later, senior CID officials made up the farcical "Joj Mia" story and detained the man from Noakhali along with 20 petty criminals.

## Conduct

commissioned its own probe.

Suu Kyi agreed Tuesday on the importance of an "accurate and appropriate" investigation. She defended the government-commissioned panel as free and effective, and its members — one each from Japan and the Philippines and two from Myanmar — as experts on human rights and international issues.

"I welcome Japan's support for our efforts for the refugees' return," said Suu Kyi, who is in Tokyo for a six-day Mekong regional summit hosted by Japan.

But Yanghee Lee — who has been barred from entering the country since December — said the government has shown little capacity for an unbiased probe into the violence, saying it has taken "limited and insufficient steps."

"[Myanmar] is unable and unwilling to discharge its obligation to conduct credible, prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations and prosecutions," Lee said in a report she published via her Twitter account on Monday