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NO MERCY for café attack perpetrators

Sentencing 7 militants to death, court says Holey Artisan attack was designed to assassinate the non-communal character of Bangladesh

CHATANYA CHANDRA HALDAR, WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced seven militants to death for their involvement in the 2016 Holey Artisan Bakery attack, terming it a disgraceful attack aimed at assassinating the non-communal character of Bangladesh.

The Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal acquitted one accused as it found him not guilty in the atrocity that left 22 people, including 17 foreigners, dead in the capital's Gulshan.

The judgment came more than three years after the country's deadliest café siege which, according to the court, was aimed at endangering public safety and drawing attention of the international militant organisation IS.

The grisly attack followed a spate of target killings of bloggers, writers, members of religious minorities and foreigners over a span of several years.

The siege that drew global condemnation warranted a massive crackdown by law enforcers on terror networks in the Muslim-majority country with secularism as one of the four basic principles of the constitution.

"Through this disgraceful attack, an attempt was made to assassinate the non-communal character of Bangladesh. Foreigners here suffered from a sense of insecurity.

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Jahangir Hossain alias Rajib Gandhi being taken to prison after a Dhaka court sentenced him and six other militants to death yesterday in the Gulshan café attack case.



Reaction from Faraaz's family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Café attack victim Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain's family has expressed satisfaction over the verdict and gratitude to the government for its zero tolerance approach to terrorism.

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced seven militants to death for their involvement in the 2016 attack. It, however, acquitted another accused.

"We, Faraaz's family, express our deepest gratitude to the government of Bangladesh for the zero tolerance approach in combatting the scourge of terrorism, with great success," said Zaraif Ayaat Hossain, brother of Faraaz.

This in turn has galvanised and united the people of Bangladesh in a shared revulsion to terrorism, he said, adding, "We believe that the government's fight against terrorism and the evils that go with it, will continue to be relentless.

"Today, we are reminded of the terrorist attack on

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"We, Faraaz's family, express our deepest gratitude to the government of Bangladesh for the zero tolerance approach in combatting the scourge of terrorism, with great success."

ZARAI AYAAT HOSSAIN, BROTHER OF FARAAZ HOSSAIN



"I am happy and I want quick execution of the verdict."

UMME SALMA, WIFE OF POLICE OFFICIAL RABIUL KARIM

CAFE ATTACK VERDICT Rabiul's family for quick execution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The family of slain police official Rabiul Karim wants quick execution of the verdict in the Gulshan café attack case.

Rabiul, assistant commissioner of Detective Branch, was killed as militants hurled grenades at law enforcers and opened fire as soon as he and his colleagues reached the spot. Splinters hit him in the right chest.

The other slain official, Salauddin Khan, was the officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station. He had suffered splinter wounds in his throat.

"I am happy and I want quick execution of the verdict," Umme Salma, wife of Rabiul said, in her reaction to the judgment yesterday.

She thanked the government as well as the police administration for their efforts to identify the militants involved in the attack.

Rabiul's mother Karimunnessa said her three-year wait for justice ended yesterday. "I know I will not get back my son, but we are all happy. Hopefully the verdict will be executed soon."

Meanwhile, the United States said the trial of 2016 Holey Artisan attack represents a landmark case for Bangladesh.

The US embassy in Dhaka in a statement said the verdict gives some closure to the families of those who suffered from the brutal murders committed that day.

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THE SEVEN CONVICTS

After three and a half years of the grisly attack on Holey Artisan Bakery in the capital, a Dhaka court yesterday sentenced seven militants to death

- THE CHARGES**
- Attempting to kill or grievously injuring people or keeping them hostage
 - Financing terrorist acts
 - Getting membership of a banned entity
 - Supporting the banned entity

 Abdus Sabur Khan	 Mamunur Rashid Ripon
 Rakibul Hasan Regan	 Shariful Islam Khaled
 Hadisur Rahman Sagor	 Aslam Hossain Rash
 Jahangir Hossain	

"In regard to punishment, the accused don't deserve compassion or sympathy."

JUDGE MD MAJIBUR RAHMAN OF THE ANTI-TERRORISM SPECIAL TRIBUNAL OF DHAKA

Arrogance writ large

RAFIUL ISLAM and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Unable to hear the judge clearly, accused Mizanur Rahman, 63, thought he had been given the death penalty. From the dock, he let out "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is the greatest) and called for the destruction of all "infidels".

He was louder than the other seven in the dock who too were saying "Allahu Akbar" when the judge was delivering the verdict.

Mizan's demeanour, however, changed dramatically when he learnt he was actually acquitted in the Gulshan café attack case yesterday.

He then started saying, "I was not involved and that's why I should be freed."

While Judge Md Majibur Rahman of the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka was reading out the verdict, Mizan kept on saying, "I cannot hear what the judge is saying."

The dock was around 15 yards away from the judge. There were at least 200 people, including journalists, lawyers, and law enforcers, inside the courtroom.

At one stage, Mizan, in his Chapainawabganj dialect, started asking people, "Hey brother, what does he [Judge] say?"

Nobody responded.

Within seconds of learning his fate, convict Jahangir Hossain alias Rajib Gandhi, one of the planners of the attack, let out "Allahu Akbar" several times.

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MIGRANTS IN KSA 32 women urge PM to rescue them

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A group of 32 female migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, who fled their employers following torture, yesterday begged Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to rescue them.

In a video message, members of the group alleged that they received no help from the Bangladesh authorities in Saudi Arabia or anyone else.

"Some of us have little children at home. Some lost their parents and children while staying here. We are suffering a lot. We beg you [Sheikh Hasina], please save our lives," one of the victims said in the message.

Jannatul Ferdous, an inhabitant of a deportation camp, told The Daily Star that all of them fled their employers following different forms of abuses -- physical, sexual and overwork -- and reached out to the Saudi police. Later, they were sent to

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Construction workers of metro rail project pulling a tarpaulin sheet over a heap of dirt in the capital's Khamarbari area yesterday after a mobile court of the Department of Environment fined the contractors Tk 1 lakh for contributing to air pollution. Inset, a water truck being used to reduce dust in the air. The High Court on Tuesday asked the authorities to have water sprayed in dust-affected areas, walls, and trees in the city at least twice a day to reduce air pollution.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Protect female workers abroad

JS body asks ministry to take effective measures to save them from abuse, torture

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary watchdog yesterday asked the foreign ministry to prepare a specific work plan to stop torture and sexual harassment of female expatriate workers, saying that even a single such incident was not acceptable.

At a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the parliamentary standing committee on foreign ministry also advised the ministry to take the issue very seriously, said meeting sources.

The committee asked the foreign ministry to collect personal information of the female workers from the expatriate welfare ministry before they are sent abroad.

"If their names and other personal information are available, we will be able to monitor their condition," a committee member told The Daily Star quoting a foreign ministry official.

Speaking at the meeting, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said around six lakh Bangladeshi women were working abroad. Of them, around 2.5 lakh were in Saudi Arabia.

"Of the total women workers abroad, around 1 percent [6,000] or less face torture and other problems at their workplaces," he said.

The parliamentary body asked the top foreign ministry officials to take effective measures to stop torture and harassment of the female workers in Saudi Arabia and some other countries.

Ministry officials said the expatriate welfare ministry did not inform them about the female workers after sending

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