

## Bangladesh sentences 19 to death over 2004 grenade attack

By- Siam Sarower Jamil, IT Correspondent  
Dhaka, Oct 11,

A speedy trial tribunal of Bangladesh on Wednesday sentenced 19 people, including ex state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar and former deputy minister for education Abdus Salam Pintu, to death while 19 others, including Bangladesh Nationalist Party acting chairman Tarique Rahman, to life imprisonment in two cases filed over the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in the capital in 2004.

Besides, 11 people were awarded different terms of jail in the sensational cases, said public prosecutor Mosharrif Hossain Kajal. Judge Shahed Nuruddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 at Old Dhaka's Nazimuddin Road pronounced the verdict around 12:13pm after a long wait for over 14 years.

The others who were awarded death penalty are then DGFI (Forces Intelligence) director retired major general Rezaul Haider Chowdhury, then National Security Intelligence (NSI) director retired brigadier general Abdur Rahim, Mohammad Hanif, Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, Sheikh Abdus Salam, Abdul Mazed, Maulana Shawkat Osman, Mahibullah alias Maifuzur Rahman, Maulana Abu Taher, Maulana Abu Sayeed, Mohammad Jahangir Alam, Abul Kalam Azad, Maunuddin Sheikh alias Abu Zandal, Ujjal alias Ratan, Hossain Ahmed Tanin, Sheikh Abdus Salam and Abdul Malek. All of the condemned convicts were also fined Tk 1 lakh each.

The other 11 are Shahadat Ullah alias Jewel, Maulana Abdur Rauf, Sabbir Ahmed, Tarik Hasan Sumon, Hafez Maulana Yeahia, Abu Bakkar, Ariful Islam, Mahibul Mutakin, Anisul Mursalin, Mohammad Khalil, Jahangir Alam Badar, Iqbal, Liton, then prime minister Khaleda Zia's political secretary Abul Harris Chowdhury, Shah Moazzem Hossain Kaikobad, Mufti Shafiqur Rahman, Mufti Abdul Hye and Ratul Ahmed.

They were also fined Tk 50,000 each and in case of failure to pay the penalty, they will have to serve one more year in jail.

The tribunal sentenced former IGP's Ashraful Huda and Khuda Baksh Chowdhury, Shahidul Haque, retired lieutenant commander Saiful Islam Duke, retired lieutenant colonel Saiful Islam Zoardar, retired major general ATM Amin, ex-DIG Khan Sayeed Hasan, former police super Obaidur Rahman Khan and Ruhul Amin. ASPs Abdur Rashid and Musnhi Atiqur Rahman to two years' imprisonment. They were also fined Tk 50,000 each, in default, to suffer six months more in jail.

Of the convicts, Tarique Rahman, Mursalin, Mahibul, Khalil, Jahangir, Iqbal, Liton, then prime minister's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, Kaikobad, Shafiqur, Abdul Hye, Ratul, Saiful Islam, ATM Amin and Sayeed Hasan were tried in absentia.

Talking to reporters after the verdict, Kajal said they also

sought death penalty for Tarique Rahman in the cases. "We'll appeal against the judgment with the higher court," he said. Kajal said the fugitives will be brought to justice.

Meanwhile, defence lawyer Sanaullah Mia said they were disappointed at the verdict. He claimed that Tarique Rahman, son of Ex prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia is innocent.

Replying to a query, Sanaullah said the verdict against Tarique will be challenged once he returns home.

BNP also turned down the verdict, saying it has been given at the 'behest of the government' with a political motive. "BNP thinks that the verdict is a politically motivated one. It's a naked manifestation of satisfying government's political vengeance," said BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir while speaking at a press conference at party's Naya Paltan central office.

Of the charge-sheeted accused, Jamaat E Islami, secretary general Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, who is also accused in war crimes of 1971 and Islamic militant leaders Mufti Abdul Hannan and Sharif Shahedul Alam alias Bipul — were dropped from the cases as they had been executed after convictions in other cases. Thirty-one accused, including Babar and Salam, were produced before the tribunal from a Gazipur jail before the delivery of the verdict.

They were brought to the tribunal from Kashipur Central Jail in Gazipur in three prison vans around 11:20am. Meanwhile, security was beefed up in the capital, including in and around the special trial court, to fend off any untoward incident over the verdict.

Additional law enforcers were deployed at important points of the capital while members of Rapid Action Battalion, Bomb Disposal unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Armed Police Battalion remained posted at Nazimuddin Road.

Besides, the movement of pedestrians on and around the road was restricted.

Earlier on September 18, the tribunal fixed October 10 to pronounce its verdict in two cases — one for murder and the other for grenade blast — after both the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments.

Closing their arguments, the prosecution sought the highest punishment to all the accused, including Tarique, saying they were able to prove all the charges beyond reasonable doubt. They also said Tarique masterminded the attack and helped militants in order to kill Sheikh Hasina by throwing the grenades to make Awami League leaderless.

But the defence lawyers sought acquittal of their clients as they said the prosecution failed to present a substantial evidence to prove the charges.

They also claimed that Tarique, who has been staying in London since 2008, was implicated in the cases with a political motive. Earlier, the court set

September 17 and 18 for hearing the closing arguments after hearing the prosecution's rebuttal arguments against defence arguments on September 12. On October 23 last, the prosecution started placing arguments before the tribunal in connection with the two cases filed over the August 21 grenade attack on the Awami League rally in the capital in 2004.

On August 21, 2004, the grisly grenade attack was carried out on an anti-terrorism rally arranged by Awami League at Bangabandhu Avenue during the BNP-Jamaat alliance's rule, aiming to kill then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina.

At least 24 leaders and activists, including AL's women affairs secretary and late President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, were killed and 300 others injured in the grenade attack. Although Sheikh Hasina fortunately escaped the attack unhurt, her hearing was affected badly.

At least 13 grenades were thrown from the rooftops of a nearby building soon after Sheikh Hasina had finished her speech at the rally. Then the two cases — one under the Explosive Substances Act and another for murder — were filed in connection with the grenade attack. The then BNP-led government formed a one-member investigation committee comprising of High Court Justice Jainul Abedin on August 22, 2004.

Justice Jainul Abedin submitted his report after 40 days indicting that a powerful foreign intelligence agency had a hand in the incident. But Awami League turned down the probe report. As the Criminal Investigation Department was later assigned to deal with the cases, they made a cooked-up story of Joj Mia and arrested him with 20 other people in connection with the incident in June 2005. Joj Mia was reportedly forced to give a statement confessing to his involvement in the attack. Later, there had been no progress in the investigation during the BNP-Jamaat rule.

The investigation into the grenade attack took a new turn after the military-backed caretaker government took over following the 1/11 political changeover in 2007. On June 11, 2008, the CID assistant police superintendent Fazul Kabir submitted two separate charge-sheets in the two cases, accusing 22 people, including Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami operations commander Mufti Abdul Hannan and Abdus Salam Pintu.

After recording the testimonies of 61 prosecution witnesses, a court on August 3, 2009 ordered further investigation into the cases following petitions filed by the prosecution after the Awami League came to power.

Now-retired police officer Abdul Kahar Akanda was given the charge for carrying out investigation into the cases. In July, 2011, a supplementary charge-sheet was submitted accusing 30 more people, including Tarique Rahman, former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, Abul Harris Chowdhury and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed.

## Assam places visited by Gandhi to be developed

From a Correspondent  
Guwahati, Oct 11,

Assam government has decided to develop the places visited by Mahatma Gandhi as historical sites so that the youth could be more accustomed to Gandhi's life and works as well as realize the significance of the places.

State chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal, during a meeting for discussing the celebration of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma in the city, directed the concerned departments to take up necessary steps for developing of the sites within Assam.

"It was also decided to adopt extensive activities as part of the celebration by the state government in the meeting, where Sonowal stressed on adequately highlighting Mahatma's life, works and ideals among the youth," said a government communiqué.

## Assam to observe Ekta Diwas

IT News  
Guwahati, Oct. 11,

Assam will observe Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (National Unity Day) on 31 October next to commemorate the birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. People from all sections of the society will be involved in

## CORCOM calls for total shut down on October 15

Imphal, Oct. 11,

Conglomerate of 4 major rebel groups operating in the region has called total shut down on October - CORCOM calls total shut down from midnight 12 am to 6 pm in the evening of October 15 to observe 'National Black Day.'

A press communiqué by media coordinator, CorCom, Leibaak Ngaakpa Luwang stated that it has been 68 years since India forcefully colonised Kangleipak (Manipur). The public shall never accept the declaration made on October 15, 1949 that Kangleipak has been merged into colonial India, it said. The merger agreement signed under duress by the then King, Bodhachandra is being called the "Merger Agreement of Deception" and voices of dissent are being raised against it by the people till today, it stated.

Publicity committee (CorCom) appeals the people not to conduct normal businesses, official duties, travelling, sport activities and festivities to denounce the said date, it further said. However,

emergency services and media activities, water delivery services and matters related to faith will be relaxed, it added. It has been recorded in the royal chronicle, Cheitharok Kumbaba that a new beginning of Kangleipak's (Manipur) history began on 33 AD during the reign of Meidingu Nongda Lairen Pakhangba, it informed. During his reign from 1074 to 1122 AD, the first constitution of the state, 'Loiyumba Sinyel' was established and it had been implemented in the state till 1891 AD, it further informed.

After 65 years of colonial rule under the British Empire, Kangleipak become independent in the night of August 14, 1947, the release informed. Manipur State Constitution Act 1947 was introduced in the state and democracy was implemented by King Bodhachandra with the conduct of Manipur State Assembly Election from June 11 to July 27 in the year 1948, it added.

After 53 representatives were elected, an independent Legislative Assembly began working on October 18, 1948 by King Bodhachandra; to achieve that goal, Corcom will undertake relentless efforts and continue the war of self-liberation movement, it added.

The organisation appeals all to observe October 15 as "National Black Day" and give full support to the ongoing war of Independence by considering it as everyone's most important responsibility and take part in it, it said.

Independence and they have no other choices but to take part in the self-liberation movement, it stated. No other means are there for the people, as to live under a colonial rule is akin to living a life of a slave, it added. On the other hand, AFSPA-1958 has been implemented in the WESEA region and all the rights of the people including the right to life have been taken away, it alleged. The implementation of AFSPA in WESEA region is the concrete evidence that the region is a colonised place, it maintained. Since its implementation, hundreds of innocents have been murdered in Manipur, it added.

The self-liberation movement is not being undertaken as waging a war against India, it is not about the Law and Order situation of India or about internal disturbance, it is about a "Manipur - India conflict" which resulted out of efforts to regain the lost sovereignty and Independence, it informed.

The closure of this conflict will take place only when the Independence of Manipur is regained, it stated. To achieve that goal, Corcom will undertake relentless efforts and continue the war of self-liberation movement, it added.

The organisation appeals all to observe October 15 as "National Black Day" and give full support to the ongoing war of Independence by considering it as everyone's most important responsibility and take part in it, it said.

## UNLFF pay homage to its departed cadres

IT News  
Imphal, Oct 11,

Rebel group United National Liberation Front (UNLFF) has paid revolutionary salute to two of its cadres. A ceremony in honour of the two cadres was held at the General Headquarters (GHQ) of UNLFF/MPA and also at every unit and battalions of the organisation at 10:00 am of October 10.

A statement Director, department of publicity, UNLFF/MPA, M. Sak-hen stated that during the ceremony, along with the performance of their last rites, full organisational honours were given to the two invaluable members of UNLFF/MPA namely, 2nd lieutenant, Wanglensana and sergeant Leephaba who lost their lives in an unfortunate incident that took place on October 8, 2018 at the operational area of 293 Bn of MPA.

Wanglensana alias Sanjit, 40, son of (Late) Ng. Giri of Jiribam Motbung, Jiribam District obtained BMT in 2000 and on August 22, 2000, he was formally sworn in as a cadre of the 19th Batch of



MPA. After spending some time at GHQ, he was transferred to the department of finance on December 25, 2000 where he commenced duties at Manipur valley. Subsequently, he got transferred back to MPA on April 1, 2003 and was attached with a platoon of MFA during which he took part in several battles with Indian Occupational Forces (IOF), it said.

The release also stated that in 2006, while staying at Jiribam and performing orders from the organisation, Wanglensana was arrested by personnel of 14 AR from Sorok Atingbi, Jiribam and spent five months in prison, and after his release from prison, Wanglensana remained at the GHQ of the party from January, 2007. He



also used to work at 241 Bn of MPA during which he participated in various attacks and ambushes on IOF.

In 2011, Wanglensana began working for an armed unit under GHQ and on February 19, 2012 he returned back to external affairs of the party. However, he was transferred back to GHQ on September 1, 2004 where he took up duties as an army cadre and was designated with 293 Bn on January 17, 2017, the release said while adding that 2nd Lt. Wanglensana was dedicated, diligent, self-sacrificing and brave officer of MPA. In his 18 years of service with the organisation, he never strayed from any activity and was always striving hard to perform his duties well. Wanglensana is survived by his wife and two children, it added.

The release additionally said that after completing basic training, Nameirakpam Leephaba alias Mahendra, 28, son of N. Amusana of Khundrakpam Awang Leikai, Imphal East took oath as a cadre belonging to the 34th Batch of MPA on September 15, 2008 following which he was posted on October 1, 2009 as an army cadre with the

241 Bn of MPA. In 2012, he further received training as a wireless operator and from then on served as radio operator at the signal staff unit at GHQ for a long time. In 2013, Nameirakpam Leephaba was promoted to the rank of lance corporal and he continued in the army to receive the rank of corporal in 2015. He was transferred to 291 Bn on December 12, 2015 where he served as radio operator at Signal Staff for two years.

Leephaba also took part in the Barak operation as a member of CORCOM's Joint force which undertook an attack on IOF in 2016. He continued with 291 Bn for a while even after being promoted to sergeant of the army. Leephaba was again transferred to 293 Bn on April 1, 2018 where he served as operator and QM till the day he met his demise.

Sergeant Leephaba was a dedicated and brave member of the party who never showed anger and always maintained a cool and calm demeanour. He was also a firm believer in the ideals of revolution and remained dedicated to the cause till his death, it said.

UNLFF/MPA, in its release, further stated the demise of two of its dedicated members in the unfortunate incident is a great loss for the organisation. The dedication, effort and the bravery shown by the two deceased members and their actions will always be remembered and honoured by all, it said while adding that UNLFF/MPA share in the sorrow of the bereaved families.

## Name Changed

I, the undersigned, Chongtham Bijaya Devi (New name), previously called Thongram Bijaya Devi Residence of Chingmeirong mamang Leikai, P.O, P.S. - Porompat, Manipur 795005 that I expressly authorized and request all persons in general and relatives and friends in particular, at all times hereafter to designate and address me and remitter issue by such assumed name Chongtham Bijaya Devi .

Sd/-  
Chongtham Bijaya Devi  
Chingmeirong mamang  
Leikai