

FACTBOX: Road to Final Verdict

Thursday, 19 November 2009

The following is a chronology of the key events since the assassination of Bangladesh's independence hero Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Aug 15, 1975: President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his wife, three sons, relatives and close associates are killed in the family's Dhanmondi home in Dhaka by renegade army officers. His daughters, Sheikh Hasina, now the prime minister, and Sheikh Rehana survive the carnage as they were abroad.

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Sept 26: Khandaker Mushtaq Ahmed's government that was installed after the bloody coup passes an ordinance in November that year indemnifying the perpetrators and closing the door on the possibility of a trial.

Aug 14, 1996: Three prime accused in the murder case--Lt Colonel (dismissed) Syed Faruk Rahman, Lt Colonel (retired) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan and former state minister Taheruddin Thakur are arrested.

Oct 2: Twenty-one years into the killings, Sheikh Mujib's personal assistant AFM Muhitul Islam files a case accusing 24 people.

Nov 12: Sheikh Mujib's eldest daughter Sheikh Hasina in her first stint as prime minister repeals the indemnity ordinance, paving the way for the murder trial to take place.

March 12, 1997: A sessions judge's court in Dhaka begins hearing the murder trial against 20 accused, as four other co-accuse die by that time.

Nov 8, 1998: The Dhaka court sentences 15 of the accused to death. Four of the accused--Major (retired) Bazlul Huda, Lt Col (dismissed) Syed Faruk Rahman, Lt Col (retired) Sultan Shahriar Khan Rashid and Lt Col (retired) Mohiuddin Ahmed (artillery) appeal the verdict in the High Court.

Dec 14, 2000: The High Court gives a split verdict in the case--Justice Mohammed Ruhul Amin upholds death sentences of 10 of the convicts but Justice A B M Khairul Haque retains death sentences of all the 15.

April 30, 2001: Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim of a third High Court bench acquits three of the 15 convicts, upholding death penalty of the rest 12. Four of them behind bars file leave to appeal for a review.

Oct 4, 2009: Chief justice M M Ruhul Amin forms a five-judge new bench, headed by justice Mohammed Tafazzal Islam, at the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to hear the appeals to commute penalties by five death convicts.

Oct 5: The bench starts hearing the appeals.

Nov 12: The Supreme Court, at the end of hearings, sets November 19 for delivering the verdict.

Source: bdnews24.com