



Court Correspondent

The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the verdict of the International Crimes Tribunal-2 that had condemned Jamaat-e-Islami leader M Kamaruzzaman, a 1971 operator of infamous Al Badr vigilante outfit, to death for committing crimes against humanity, including rape and mass killing, during the Liberation War, 43 years ago.

A four-member SC Appellate Division Bench, headed by Justice SK Sinha, delivered the short order of the verdict in a crowded courtroom amid tight security in and around the apex court. The three other members were Justice MA Wahhab Miah, Justice Hasan Foez Siddique and Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury.

Forty-six days ago, on September 17, the Appellate Division kept its verdict pending to be delivered any day after closing arguments on the appeal filed by the war criminal convict against the May 9, 2013 ICT-2 judgment.

The conviction in respect of the charge of killing 164 people along with rape was maintained unanimously, but the sentence of death upheld by majority view, said the SC order.

The grave charge, which has been proved beyond reasonable doubt, says: On July 25, 1971, accused Kamaruzzaman advised members of Al-Badr and Razakar militia to commit a large-scale massacre in collaboration with the Pakistani troops in Sohagpur village of Nalitabari upazila in Sherpur. The collaborators murdered 164 unarmed civilians and raped many women. So many men were killed in the attack that later on Sohagpur became known as village of widows (Bidhoba Palli)."

The SC although upheld another conviction against the appellant for killing Golam Mostafa of Girda Narayanpur village in Sherpur following his abduction on August 23, 1971, the sentence of capital punishment was commuted to life-term imprisonment.

It also retained the conviction and sentence to 10 years rigorous imprisonment on charge of torture on a pro-liberation intellectual, Principal Syed A Hannan of Sherpur College. Al Badr operator Kamaruzzaman and his cohorts had compelled him to walk naked through the town under constant whipping.

Besides, the SC maintained the conviction sentencing the appellant to life-term imprisonment on charge of killing Dara and five others while acquitting the lifer-appellant of the charge from killing Badiuzzaman of Ramnagar village in Jhenaigati upazila of Sherpur on June 30, 1971,

after abduction and torture.

On June 4 last year, the ICT-2 indicted M Kamaruzzaman on seven charges of crimes against humanity, allegedly committed during the 1971 Liberation War. The charges were based on seven separate incidents of crimes against humanity that left at least 183 unarmed people killed and some women raped.

Kamaruzzaman was the president of Islami Chhatra Sangha's (ICS) local unit of greater Mymensingh in 1971. The ICS was a student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan period. Kamaruzzaman had played the key role in the formation of Al Badr, a secret killing squad of Jamaat-e-Islami, derived from the ICS activists to collaborate with the Pakistan occupation army that had committed genocide and other heinous crimes against humanity during the Liberation War, according to the prosecution.

Eighteen prosecution witnesses, including the investigation officer of the case, testified against Kamaruzzaman. Five people also testified for the accused.