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Potato farmers
in peril as
prices fall

B1



999 service
now in English
too

P3



Lost signals,
lost safety

P5



Taiwan detects 62
Chinese aircraft
as US ships
transit waters

P7

Hasina oversaw July protest killings: UN

Human rights office also finds systematic abuse by former ministers, security agency officials, AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina herself had ordered the killing of students and protesters during the July uprising, the United Nations Fact Finding Mission said, citing senior security officials.

“...The prime minister herself told security force officials to kill protesters to quell the protests and specifically demanded ‘arrest the ringleaders of the protests, the troublemakers, kill them and hide their bodies’,” said the report released yesterday, quoting testimonies of officials about a meeting on July 19, 2024.

“This testimony is also consistent with Awami League secretary general and government minister Obaidul Quader telling reporters on July 19 that security forces had been given orders

to ‘shoot on sight’, an instruction manifestly incompatible with international human rights standards,” added the 114-page report.

The evening before, then home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal chaired a meeting where he ordered the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) to shoot using lethal weapons, found the mission which had interviewed a participant in the meeting.

“On the evening of July 18, the then home minister chaired a meeting of the ‘Core Committee’, attended by the heads of Police, Rab, and Border Guard Bangladesh and intelligence leaders. At the meeting, the minister told the BGB commander, in front of the other senior security sector leaders, to order use of lethal force much more readily,” the report read.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

JULY UPRISING
Proof won’t
be shared till
trials meet
int’l standard
Says UN rights body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The UN will not share evidence from its investigation with Bangladesh unless trials of perpetrators of the brutal response to the July uprising meet international standards, says a top official at the UN Human Rights Office.

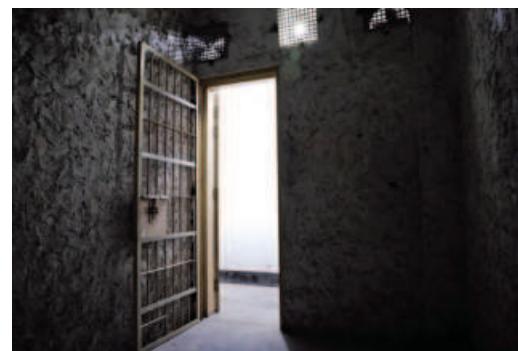
“The report does not identify perpetrators as such, but we have retained a large amount of material that is being archived to the highest standards

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, surrounded by others, points to a chair that was used to torture captives at the secret detention centre, or “Aynaghar”, in the capital’s Agargaon. The photo was taken yesterday. Bottom left: A detainee carved out the number of days he had been in captivity (1,230 days) on the wall of his cell. Bottom right: One of the cells in which victims were held captive.

PHOTOS: PID, CA PRESS WING



Aynaghar horrors never again

Says Yunus after visiting 3 secret prisons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has said the Awami League government wrought upon the country an “Ayyām al-Jahiliyyah”, an Arabic term that refers to pre-Islamic era barbarism, social injustice, and moral corruption.

The secret detention centres and torture rooms, better known as Aynaghar, are just one aspect of that regime, Prof Yunus told reporters after visiting three secret prisons in the capital yesterday.

“The things that happened here are grotesque,” he told reporters after the visit.

Several survivors, family members of the victims, six advisers, and journalists from Al Jazeera, Netra News, BTV, PID and members of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearance accompanied the chief adviser.

He said the horror inflicted on people to

destroy their sense of humanity. “The level of brutality here is beyond belief. The more I hear about it, the more unbelievable it feels. Is this our world, our society? How could we do this?” he asked.

He said the victims themselves told him and the others what they had endured.

“People who committed no crimes were simply abducted from the streets. Witnesses were brought in, some explosives were put in the car, and then they said, ‘You are a terrorist, a militant’.

“I thought there were a few of what they call Aynaghar. But now I hear that there are different versions of Aynaghar across the country. Some say there are 700. Some say 800. The exact number is unknown.”

The torture cells reflect the abominable state of the country during the previous regime, he

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

“The level of brutality here is beyond belief. The more we hear about it, the more unreal it feels. Is this our society?”

Chief Adviser
Prof Muhammad Yunus

‘This is where I was held captive’

Survivors share chilling tales, allege removal of evidence; victim families protest exclusion from visit

ZYMA ISLAM and
MUNTAKIM SAAD

When images of Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus inspecting three secret detention centres emerged in the media yesterday, it did not take long for survivors to recognise the places where they had been held captive.

They had not seen their places of detention since their release (at different times), as these secret centres were off-limits.

Even the commission investigating enforced disappearances had been prohibited from photographing the centers, they alleged in a letter to the chief adviser earlier.

Humam Quader Chowdhury, who was forcibly taken away by plainclothes men on August 4, 2016, was released on March 2, 2017.

He was a part of Yunus’s



my cell, I said I would not be able to do it with my eyes open because we were always blindfolded. So, I closed my eyes and found my cell by counting the number of steps I had to take to reach it,” said Humam. Iqbal Chowdhury, who was inside the JIC between May 7, 2018, and April 25, 2019, recognised two rooms as having possibly been his cells.

One room with high walls, now painted pink, looked to him like his main cell. “The hundreds of writings on these walls have now been painted over.”

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES DURING THE PROTEST

- ▶ Incited violence by armed Awami League supporters
- ▶ Use-of-force violations by Police, Rab, and BGB, including extrajudicial killings
- ▶ Army involved in use-of-force violations
- ▶ Helicopters used to intimidate and deploy possibly unlawful force
- ▶ Medical care and necessary medical documentation denied
- ▶ Mass arbitrary arrests, detention without due process, and torture and ill-treatment
- ▶ Intimidation and attacks on journalists
- ▶ Unjustified internet shutdowns, lacking due process
- ▶ Violations and abuses targeting protesting women and girls
- ▶ Violations and abuses against children

VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE PROTESTS

- ▶ Revenge abuses targeting police, members of AL and affiliate groups, and media
- ▶ Abuses against indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts
- ▶ Attacks on Hindu homes, businesses and places of worship, and related displacement
- ▶ Attacks on Ahmadiyya Muslims

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF VIOLATIONS AND SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Use of military rifles and metal pellet-loaded shotguns in public order management

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Prohibit use of shotgun pellets or other lethal ammunition to disperse crowds and immediately cease equipping the police with metal pellet ammunition for public order management

2. Outdated laws enabling the use of disproportionate force

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ Replace Police Act 1861 and Police Regulations Bengal with human rights-compliant laws
- ▶ Order police to cease practices of mass criminal charges and mass arrests

MORE ON PAGE 2