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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE Order came from AL govt high-ups

Commission says, warns against
“community shielding” for
individual responsibilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The order to carry out enforced disappearances during the ousted Awami League government tenure came from the very top, and the perpetrators will be brought to justice, even in their absence if necessary, the Commission of Enquiry on Enforced Disappearances said yesterday.

“We found that the highest level of the government was involved in committing this crime,” commission Chairperson Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury told reporters at the commission office in Dhaka.

Replying to a query, he said Sheikh Hasina’s adviser Tarique Ahmed Siddique was involved in ordering enforced disappearance and they have evidence to that end.

The commission has interviewed 45 members of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and identified a good number of law enforcers and intelligence officers involved in carrying out enforced disappearances, he said, without disclosing any names.

“Some people are apprehensive because we are finding involvement of some individuals in enforced disappearances, and the entire force is becoming panic-stricken. We want to tell them that the individuals belonging to law enforcement units or intelligence agencies who were



The Kushigang river in Sylhet has turned into a narrow stream for what the locals claim are unauthorised brick kilns and housing estates along its banks, and a very dry winter and spring. The photo was taken in the Kushighat area yesterday.
PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

“Certain agencies have gotten panic-stricken because of our investigation. We want to tell them not to be afraid. If someone from a law enforcement agency or an intelligence agency was involved with enforced disappearance, it was entirely their own personal liability. No agency should own them, or their crimes.”

Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury
Commission Chief



involved have to take personal criminal responsibility for their crimes,” he said.

He also warned against “community shielding” of perpetrators, saying that criminals sometimes hide behind the collective identity of their community, social group or religion.

“This is called identity-based defence or community shielding. But a person is not tried based on their collective identity, but rather based on specific evidence. Criminal liability is an individual responsibility. There is no scope to accuse an entire community for the crime.”

During Sheikh Hasina’s 15-year rule, hundreds of opposition leaders, rights activists, journalists, and other professionals critical of the government simply disappeared. Although some returned home or were later sent to jail in trumped up charges after brutal torture, many never made it back home.

Talking about the victims of enforced disappearance who are still missing, Justice Moyeenul said the likelihood of their still being alive is minimal.

Currently, there are 330 cases of enforced disappearances involving individuals who have not returned, and the commission is looking for them, he said.

The commission is now inspecting records from India to determine if any of them are in Indian prisons or elsewhere, the commission chief said.

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Constituent assembly, nat’l polls can be held together

Says NCP chief Nahid Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nahid Islam, convenor of the National Citizen Party (NCP), at the party’s first public programme since its launch, yesterday proposed holding constituent assembly elections and the parliamentary polls simultaneously.

“Constituent assembly elections will help pave the way for a new constitution and a genuine democratic process. The constituent assembly polls and the national parliamentary election can be held together. This will enable the formation of a new framework and the creation of a new Bangladesh.”

He made these remarks after visiting the graves of the July uprising martyrs in the capital’s Rayerbazar. He was accompanied by other NCP leaders.

Nahid also demanded swift justice for the repression during the uprising.

“Through fair justice, we can at least alleviate some of the sufferings of those [the families of those] who sacrificed their lives and those who were injured.

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Mob violence persists amid weak policing

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and
SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Shahjahan Mintiz was standing in front of his house in Nazrul Nagar area of Char Fasson, Bhola, on Sunday morning when a group of men dragged him away, claiming that he was a thief.

There had been several incidents of theft in the village and the residents were angry. The men broke Mintiz’s arms and legs before gouging out both his eyes.

Mintiz, 40, was accused in six cases. He was arrested in November last year and is now out on bail.

But police later said they have no information that Mintiz was involved in any incident of theft that day.

Ershadul Haque Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Dakshin Aicha Police Station, said no one had filed any complaint regarding the mob beating. “If we receive a complaint, we will take action,” he told The Daily Star.

Mob violence has been occurring in the country for years. But the recent spate of mugging and robbery has apparently caused a surge in such incidences.

Rights activists and criminologists point out that political instability and weak governance have created a vacuum, which the wrongdoers are

taking advantage of.

Tawohidul Haque, associate professor at Dhaka University’s Institute of Social Welfare and Research, said due to the deterioration of law and order, people are resorting to mob violence.

When people see law enforcement agencies failing to act and criminals taking advantage, they take matters into their own hands, he said.

According to Ain o Salish Kendra, mob beatings claimed at least 128 lives last year, with 96 occurring between August and December. The number of such deaths was 51 in 2023.

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan at an event yesterday said, “The government has clearly stated multiple times that there is no room for mob justice or moral policing in the country. The government has a strong stance against these.”

On Sunday, a mob assaulted and seriously injured 19-year-old Shanto

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No room for
mob justice,
moral policing

Environment
adviser tells press
briefing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday firmly stated there is no room for mob justice or moral policing in the country.

“The government has consistently taken a strong stance against such actions. However, as law and order have not yet been fully restored to normalcy, incidents of mob justice and moral policing have been observed in some areas,” she said at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy.

Referring to a recent incident in Mohammadpur, Rizwana said, “We understand that both parties involved have signed a compromise agreement in the presence of police. Since a settlement has been reached, we must respect it as the final resolution.”

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CR Abrar ‘next education adviser’
Advisory council of interim govt to expand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The size of the interim government is set to expand for the third time since it took charge in August last year.

The oath-taking ceremony is scheduled for 11:00am today at the Bangabhaban.

Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar, also known as CR Abrar, will be sworn in as an adviser and is expected to take charge of the education ministry, said Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser’s press secretary, during a briefing at the

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Leaders of National Citizen Party pay tribute to the martyrs of 1971 at the National Martyrs’ Memorial in Savar yesterday. The party said this was its first programme as a political party.

PHOTO: STAR

Ukraine can hold out on frontline

Says Kyiv after Trump
pauses military aid

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukraine said yesterday its forces could hold their own on the battlefield as they fight Russian troops after US President Donald Trump paused military aid to Kyiv in the most dramatic step yet in his pivot towards closer ties with Russia.

Trump has upended US policy on Ukraine and Russia, culminating in an explosive confrontation at the White House on Friday, when Trump upbraided President Volodymyr Zelensky for being insufficiently grateful for Washington’s backing.

“President Trump has been clear that he is focused on peace. We need our partners to be committed to that goal as well. We are pausing and reviewing our aid to ensure that it is contributing to a solution,” a US official said on Monday.

Ukraine’s Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Kyiv still had the wherewithal to supply its troops. “Our military and the government have the capabilities, the tools, let’s say, to maintain the situation on the front line,” he said.

Shmyhal thanked the US and emphasised that Kyiv wanted mutually-beneficial cooperation. “We will

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