

ICT CASE
Hasina's counsel
seeks discharge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The state-appointed defence counsel for ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday pleaded to the International Crimes Tribunal-1 to discharge his clients, saying that they are innocent and the charges brought against them are politically motivated.

While placing arguments on discharge petitions in the case filed over crimes against humanity during the July uprising against Hasina and her two top aides, he also said the charges brought against his clients were "false, fabricated and baseless".

"So, I want discharge of my clients from the liability of the case," Amir Hossain told the three-member tribunal.

This was opposed by Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam, who termed it a flat denial.

Following arguments from both sides, the tribunal fixed July 10 for passing its order on whether to frame charges or discharge Hasina and Kamal.

The defence counsel for the other accused, former Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, neither filed any discharge petition for his client nor made any argument.

Hasina and her two top aides were charged with five counts of crimes against humanity on June 1, including murder, attempted murder, torture and use of lethal weapons, among others.

About the allegations about Hasina calling for the elimination of 'the descendants of Razakars', Hossain argued that she was in power for many years and if she had really intended to do so, she would have done it earlier.

"Since she never did that, why would she now order the killing of young boys?"

When pointed towards a phone conversation with Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, the former mayor of Dhaka South, in which Hasina instructed the students' killing, he argued that such a claim by the prosecution is not valid as they have no documentary evidence to support it.

Blockade intensifies

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been demonstrating since July 1.

Protests flare outside Dhaka as well, with students from Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Mymensingh Agricultural University, Cumilla University, and others enforcing blockades and staging sit-ins. In some places, like Rajshahi, students block railway lines for nearly five hours.

In response to the growing scale of the movement, student organisers form a 65 member coordination committee to strengthen communications and planning across campuses nationwide. "From now on, we will coordinate our movement through this committee," says Nahid Islam, a student of Dhaka University and one of the lead organisers. "We will work together to build a larger blockade on July 10."

Meanwhile, at the Awami League's Dharmundi political office, three ministers and two state ministers, including Obaidul Quader, Anisul Huq, and Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, hold a closed door meeting to discuss the crisis. They call for restraint, urging the students to avoid actions that cause



Students block Dhaka's Shahbagh intersection on July 8 as part of the "Bangla Blockade," demanding the abolition of the quota system in government jobs.

public suffering while the case remains pending before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Law Minister Anisul Huq reiterates that since the matter is under judicial consideration, protesters should present their arguments through legal channels rather than on the streets.

But on the ground, anger and determination run deep. The students

see the courts as too slow and the government as indifferent. For them, the blockade is not just about a circular, it is about fairness and the right to a future free from discrimination.

As the sun sets on July 8, 2024, the blockade holds firm, setting the stage for what organisers promise will be even larger showdows in the coming days.

Life expectancy better here than global average

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Adolescents make up 19 percent of Bangladesh's population, approximately 33 million, while the broader youth cohort aged 10-24 accounts for 28 percent, nearing 50 million, Catherine added.

This year's theme of the publication is "The Real Fertility Crisis - The Pursuit of Reproductive Agency in a Changing World."

The real crisis is not about numbers; it is a crisis of reproductive agency.

"Around the world, and here in Bangladesh, people especially women and young people are unable to realise their reproductive intentions due to systemic, economic and social barriers," said the UNFPA representative.

Catherine noted that while fertility rates have dropped to 0.8 children per

woman in countries like South Korea and remain high in nations such as Niger at 5.8, Bangladesh, with a Total Fertility Rate of 2.1, continues to face systemic barriers preventing people from having the number of children they desire.

She urged the government to increase health spending from 0.7 percent to 5 percent of GDP and 15 percent of the national budget to improve maternal care, ensure contraceptive availability, and retain skilled health workers.

Economic instability, high healthcare costs, and unaffordable childcare are forcing many families to delay or forgo parenthood, she said.

Social and gender norms continue to pressure girls into early marriage and motherhood while burdening women with unpaid care work, while

high rates of gender-based violence, as shown in a recent UNFPA-supported survey, further undermine women's ability to make informed reproductive decisions, while climate change and frequent disasters are leaving young people uncertain about parenthood, she pointed out.

"These factors result in people being forced into parenthood or excluded from it—not by choice, but by constraint. What they need is empowerment and enabling conditions, not judgement," she said.

The report advocates for comprehensive sexuality education, affordable housing, paid parental leave, and the recognition of women's unpaid caregiving work—a step Bangladesh has begun by pledging to include unpaid work in GDP calculations.

83pc youth show no interest in politics

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vote rigging, and low voter turnout.

The survey further showed that 38.76 percent of the respondents felt the BNP would poll the highest votes in the upcoming election, followed by 21.45 percent for Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, 15.84 percent for the National Citizen Party (NCP), and 15.02 percent for the Awami League if it is allowed to contest.

Of the respondents, women felt more strongly than both the NCP (17.47 percent) and the AL (15.61 percent) would get more votes.

In rural areas, especially Mymensingh, more people felt the AL would fare well in the polls, while those in urban areas, including Dhaka and Chattogram, felt the same about the BNP and NCP. Meanwhile, the sentiment was evenly split when it came to Jamaat, though its support was poorest in Dhaka.

Opinions were almost evenly divided on whether religion-based politics is conducive to Bangladesh's development. While 51.77 percent replied in the affirmative, 48.23 percent disagreed.

Among Muslim respondents, 58.14 percent supported religion-based

politics, in stark contrast to 87.77 percent of non-Muslims who opposed it.

Gender-wise, men were more prone to support religion-based politics.

Around 77.2 percent of those who opposed religion-based politics said they had varying levels of anxiety about the growing presence of religion-based parties.

Asked whether religious minority groups are safer in the current scenario, 78.83 percent of respondents said yes, while 21.17 percent disagreed.

Among Muslim respondents, 84 percent believed minorities are safe, while 46.76 percent of non-Muslims felt the same.

However, nearly half of non-Muslim respondents said people are not currently free or safe to practise their religion without fear.

The survey covered all eight divisions of Bangladesh. Two districts were selected from each to ensure geographic and demographic representation.

These included Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Netrokona, Mymensingh, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Chattogram, Cumilla, Barishal, Jhalakathi, Khulna, Satkhira, Dhaka, and Munshiganj.

A near-equal distribution across rural and urban areas, and between

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men and women, was maintained while conducting the survey.

A significant majority of the youth said current social and political issues are increasingly disrupting daily life.

The most cited concern was the rise in arson, robbery, and theft, mentioned by 80.2 percent of the respondents; mob violence was identified by 71.5 percent, while 56.2 percent pointed to politically biased arrests and legal proceedings.

Over half of the respondents were alarmed by gender-based violence,

while 44.2 percent expressed concern over social backlash against feminist or liberal views. Another 61.2 percent were worried about unsafe public spaces, especially for women.

The study also highlighted the youth population's disengagement with ongoing reform processes.

Of the respondents, 43.5 percent said they were unaware of the reform initiatives underway.

Asked to rank priority areas for immediate reforms, an overwhelming 94 percent identified education system reforms as "very urgent", followed by health sector reforms at 92 percent, and labour market reforms at 90 percent.

They also called for political party reforms. Asked what kind of changes they expect in this regard, 60 percent called for an end to patronage, nepotism, and political violence.

Another 52.7 percent wanted a shift toward policy-based politics rather than personality or legacy-driven leadership, and 47.5 percent emphasised the need for greater transparency in party funding and internal democracy. Meanwhile, 43.6 percent of the respondents called for greater inclusion of youth and women in leadership roles.

Victims included a mentally ill man beaten to death in Lakshminagar,

Kaladan project to be operational by 2027: India

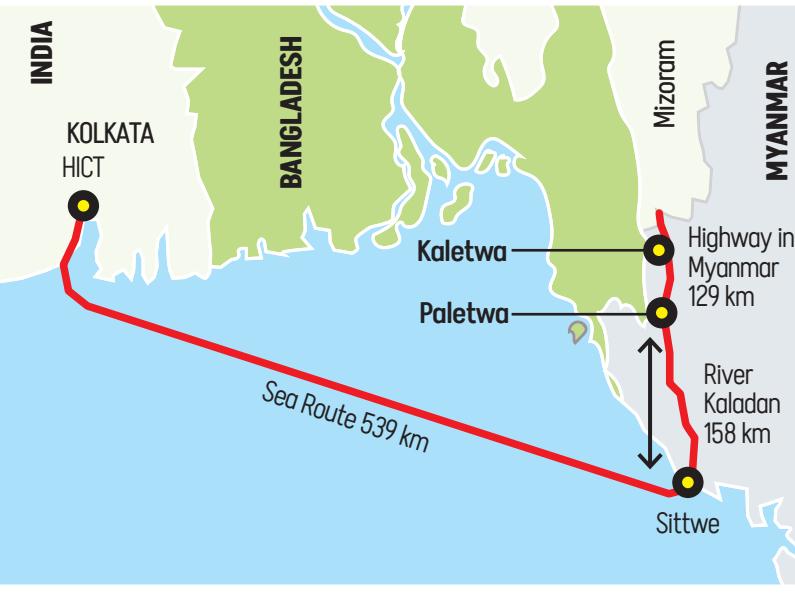
It'll benefit neighbouring countries, including Bangladesh, says Indian minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, a joint initiative between India and Myanmar, which will be fully operational by 2027, may open up new trade opportunities for neighbouring countries, said India's Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal.

"It [the project] is a strategic initiative to enhance connectivity between India's northeast and Myanmar. It is set to be fully operational by 2027... Once fully operational, the region will unlock new trade opportunities not just for northeast India, but also for Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Myanmar by connecting them with Southeast Asia," he said while announcing multiple initiatives to boost the waterways sector in northeast with an investment of Rs 5,000 crores (\$582.5 million).

KMTT aims to connect Kolkata with Mizoram in India's northeast, via Sittwe port in Myanmar, using a combination of sea, river, and land routes. This project is a key component of India's "Act East Policy" and seeks to enhance connectivity and trade with Southeast Asia, while also providing an alternative route for goods to reach the northeast, bypassing the congested Siliguri



Corridor.

The project will enable the northeast to access multiple ports as it connects Mizoram's Zorinpui with Myanmar's Sittwe port through Paletwa town.

Goods from Kolkata can be transported to Sittwe and then can be shipped to Bangladesh's Teknaf port, which is just 60 nautical miles from Sittwe, Sonowal said.

He also said that goods can be transported by road to the border

town of Sabroom in Tripura from Teknaf. Sabroom has an integrated customs border between Bangladesh and Tripura.

The project will significantly reduce transportation time and logistics costs, according to Sonowal.

Additionally, the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBPR), which is in place, provides new trade routes that bypass the Siliguri Corridor, thereby strengthening regional connectivity, he added.

No arrest, no case after Jubo Dal leader murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday said they were trying to identify and arrest the killers of a local Jubo Dal leader who was shot dead in broad daylight a day earlier in Kadapur Union of Chattogram's Raozan upazila.

As of yesterday evening, no case had been filed in connection with the killing of Muhammad Selim, 40, a former member secretary of the union unit of Jubo Dal.

Officer-in-Charge Md Manirul Islam of Raozan Police Station said they were examining available CCTV footage to identify the attackers.

He said police had learned that notorious criminal Raihan led the killing mission and that law enforcers were working to determine his whereabouts.

Operations to arrest the suspected killers are ongoing, he added.

On Sunday afternoon, Selim -- who was involved in sand trading and poultry farming -- was shot dead by a group of armed assailants in the Ishan Bhatta Bazar area while returning home after attending a relative's jenaza.

Selim was the father of two daughters -- one a fifth grader and the other just 18 months old.

Meanwhile, a video went viral on social media showing Selim's alleged killers fleeing the scene in a CNG-run auto rickshaw.

Multiple CCTV clips of the incident showed seven to eight masked assailants, some wearing burlaps, getting out of an auto rickshaw with firearms at the gate of Hazrat Ashraf Mazar in Bherempara. They were later seen switching to another auto-rickshaw and fleeing towards the hilly areas via Hazrat Ashraf Shah Mazar Road.

Police are yet to confirm the motive behind the murder.

Locals said Selim, who had multiple cases filed against him, might have been killed over a power struggle, as both the victim and the suspected assailants were involved in the sand and soil trade.

Dhaka gets some relief in US trade tariff

the number you choose to raise them by will be added onto the 25% that we charge," he wrote.

He did, however, offer a path to negotiation, adding: "If you wish to eliminate your Tariff, and Non Tariff, Policies and Trade Barriers, we will, perhaps, consider an adjustment."

The policy also stipulates that goods transshipped through a third country to evade the new duties will be subject to the higher tariff.

THREAT TO BRICS

Trump said the US will impose an additional 10 percent tariff on any country aligning itself with the "anti-American policies" of the BRICS group of developing nations, whose leaders kicked off a summit in Brazil on Sunday, according to a Reuters report.

In letters to Japan and South Korea posted on his Truth Social platform, Trump issued a direct warning against retaliation. "If for any reason you decide to raise your Tariffs, then, whatever

released on Sunday afternoon, the group warned of the rise in tariffs threatened global trade, continuing its veiled criticism of Trump's tariff policies.

Hours later, Trump warned he would punish countries seeking to join with the grouping.

"Any Country aligning themselves with the Anti-American policies of BRICS, will be charged an ADDITIONAL 10% Tariff. There will be no exceptions to this policy. Thank you for your attention to this matter!" Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

Trump did not clarify or expand on the "Anti-American policies" reference in his post.

The original BRICS group gathered leaders from Brazil, Russia, India and China at its first summit in 2009. The bloc later added South Africa and last year included Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates as members. Saudi Arabia has held off formally joining, according to sources, while another 30 nations have expressed interest in participating in the BRICS, either as full members or partners.

Rights situation 'disappointing'

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among the public, the report said.

"After the fall of the Awami League government, hopes rose among students and the public to truly experience freedom, but those hopes largely went unfulfilled. The government and its authorities concerned could not address this challenge successfully," said the report signed by HRSS executive director Ijazul Islam.

Despite hopes for improvement, human rights violations persisted this year, with new issues emerging, it added.

According to the report, at least 1,042 women and girls were subjected to sexual violence in the first half of the year, with 60 percent of the victims being minors.

Among them, 476 were raped -- 292 of whom were under 18. At least 110 were gang-raped, 14 were murdered following assault, and seven others died by suicide.

The report highlighted the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in Magura and the death of a six-year-old in Munshiganj after rape attempt.

In addition, 132 women and girls died due to domestic violence, while 72 others died by suicide. Another 541 faced physical or psychological abuse.

Political violence remained a major concern. At least 529 such incidents were reported in the first half of the year, leaving at least 79 people dead and over 4,100 injured.

Most clashes stemmed from power struggles, political revenge, committee disputes, extortion, and attempts to seize control of properties.