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## CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY Ex-IGP Mamun offers to be a state witness

ICT frames charges against Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday framed charges against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and two of her former top aides in a case related to the crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

One of her co-accused, former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, pleaded guilty and appealed to become a state witness (a witness for the prosecution).

This is the first time an accused has made such a plea at the ICT since its formation in 2010. This is also the first time accused have been charged at the ICT in a case over atrocities during the uprising.

The charges against the trio include murder, attempted murder, torture, and the use of lethal weapons and other crimes against humanity.

The ICT-1 set August 3 and August 4 for the opening statements of the prosecution and the defence and the recording of witness depositions.

The other person accused in the case, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, remains absconding. Hasina has been in India since she fled to the neighbouring country on August 5 last year.

The trio is also charged with crimes against humanity for their "superior command responsibility, conspiracy, incitement, instigation, facilitation, abetment, complicity, failure to punish, failure to prevent crimes".

Having read out the charges, Judge Md Mohitul Hoque Anam Chowdhury asked ex-IGP Mamun, "Do you plead guilty?"

In a surprise move, with all eyes in the packed courtroom on Mamun, he pleaded guilty.

"I will voluntarily disclose the truth and make full disclosure of the whole of the circumstances within my knowledge relating to the case," the former police chief said.

Tajul Islam, chief prosecutor of the ICT, later at a briefing said Mamun had applied to become an approver, and the court has granted the request.

In legal contexts, an approver is a person who, having been involved in a crime, confesses their guilt and agrees to testify against their accomplices in exchange for leniency or immunity.

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Students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College sharing hugs and smiles after the SSC results were published yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## SSC pass rate plunges to a 16-year low

Girls again outshine boys; poor performance in math, English blamed for 68.04% pass rate

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The pass rate in this year's Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations across all nine general education boards has dropped to 68.04 percent, the lowest in 16 years.

The number of GPA-5 achievers also fell sharply from 1,63,845 last year to 1,25,018.

Female students continued to

outperform their male counterparts in both pass rates and GPA scores. Girls have now led in pass rates for nine consecutive years and GPA-5s for eight.

Education officials attributed the 15.73 percentage point decline from last year to poor performance in mathematics, particularly among humanities students, and stricter evaluation.

At a press conference at the Dhaka Education Board, Prof Khondokar Ehsanul Kabir, president of the Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee, said this year's results reflect the actual performance of students.

"Examiners were instructed to evaluate papers on merit. No extra or grace marks were awarded this year."

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PHOTO: TITU DAS

Relatives take a patient from Sher-E-Bangla Medical College to a diagnostic centre on a stretcher through the busy Band Road amid pouring rain in Barishal yesterday. With essential tests either unavailable or delayed for days due to capacity constraints at the hospital, even critically ill patients are forced to seek diagnostics outside.

## Draft MoU for hosting UN rights office gets final nod

UNB, Dhaka

The council of advisers yesterday gave its final approval to the draft memorandum of understanding allowing the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to establish a mission in Bangladesh.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights or the UN Human Rights is the leading UN entity on human rights.

The 33rd meeting of the advisory council, chaired by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, was held at his office.

The council also approved a proposal for Bangladesh's accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OP-CAT).

Bangladesh became a State Party to the original Convention in 1998, said the Cabinet Division after the meeting.

The protocol, aimed at strengthening protection against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, was adopted in 2002.

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## TRUMP TARIFFS Businesses demand lobbyist for negotiations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of major business chambers and trade bodies yesterday expressed concern to the government about the 35 percent tariff levied on Bangladesh by the Trump administration.

They said Bangladesh's exports to the US, which was around \$8 billion last year, will be badly impacted by the new rate.

Nearly 200 small and medium enterprises may be closed down and more than one lakh workers may lose their jobs due to the new tariff, industry insiders said.

The new rate for export shipments to the US, Bangladesh's single largest export destination, will be effective from August 1.

The American clothing retailers and brands are already delaying work orders for the next season because of the uncertainty surrounding the tariff, since negotiations with the US are still ongoing.

After a meeting with four advisers at the Rail Bhaban in Dhaka yesterday, the business leaders claimed they requested the government to appoint lobbyist firms in the US for negotiating the tariff issue with the Trump administration at least two months ago.

"But the government did not pay heed to the suggestion," said Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

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