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'We want to show law is equal for all'

ICT-1 reacts to plea for virtual appearance of accused army officers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal 1 yesterday reacted sharply to a defence plea that several army officers accused in two enforced disappearance cases be permitted to appear virtually.

It told the counsel that they should, instead, ask the government to withdraw the cases if the accused felt discomfort in appearing in person.

"We want to demonstrate that the law is equal for all. A former chief justice, an Appellate Division judge, senior ministers, a former secretary, and a former IGP are in custody, and all of them are appearing before the court regularly," said Tribunal Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder.

His remarks came after ABM Hamidul Mishbah, representing six of the 13 army officers taken to the tribunal yesterday, pleaded for exemption from physical appearance.

When asked to explain the grounds for the request, the lawyer said the reasons were stated in his application and he could elaborate if the tribunal wished.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam then suggested that a hearing on the plea could be fixed later.

Earlier, 13 detained officers were taken to the tribunal

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'Admin must be under our control'

Says Jamaat leader Shahjahan; party says comments his own

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The administration "must be brought under Jamaat's control", said Jamaat-e-Islami central working committee member Shahjahan Chowdhury in Chattogram on Saturday.

Expressing concern that "sacks of money and weapons may enter Bangladesh from a neighbouring country centring the upcoming election", he said, "An election can't be won only with the [votes of] people... We must bring all members of the administration in every constituency under our [Jamaat's] influence."

Shahjahan, also a former MP and senior leader of the party's Chattogram city unit, made these remarks while addressing a conference at the GEC Convention Hall in the port city on Saturday evening.

The event was chaired by the party's Chattogram city Ameer Muhammad Nazrul Islam. Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman was scheduled to be present as chief guest but was not present on stage

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Three hurt in attack during protest against baul's arrest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Three people were injured yesterday in an attack on those protesting the arrest of baul singer Abul Sarker in Manikganj.

They were identified as Alim, Ariful and Zahirul.

Abul Sarker, president of Bangladesh Baul Samity, was arrested on November 20 in a case filed on charges of hurting religious sentiments.

According to witnesses, people under the banner of Touhid Janata carried out the attack in the stadium area of Manikganj town around 10:30am.

Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police in Manikganj, confirmed the incident, saying, "Artistes and people from a cultural organisation had gathered to form a human chain in the area adjacent to Shaheed Miraj Tapan Stadium."

Another procession under the banner of Touhid Janata, from the bus stand to the Deputy

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DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Political analysts urged citizens to remain vigilant all the time, not only in holding their own governments to account, but also in questioning the global systems that help shape crises in developing nations.

They underscored the need for unfettered media, greater political participation of women, and a determined effort to narrow all forms of inequality as foundations of a resilient democracy.

"The first and foremost thing that we need to do as a citizen -- wherever we are -- is basically vigilance because the price of democracy is eternal vigilance," said Prof Ali Riaz, special assistant to the chief adviser.

He was speaking at a panel discussion titled "Fragility as the New Normal: States in Permanent Emergency", at the Bay of Bengal Conversation, a three-day international event organised by the Centre for Governance Studies at a city hotel yesterday.

States often remain vulnerable to external shocks, he said. Although the global centre of gravity has shifted from the Atlantic to the Pacific with the rise of China and

Bay of Bengal Conversation
RIVALS • RUPTURES • REALIGNMENTS

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PROF ALI RIAZ
Special assistant to chief adviser

other East Asian economies, the "calculus" of the global economic order remains unchanged, according to him.

"The global economy's calculus produces a certain structure within which countries, particularly those of the Global South, have to reside and operate, and that crisis is an external economic one," said Riaz, a distinguished professor of politics and government at Illinois State University.

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Citing the recent popular uprisings in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, he said all three countries have been deeply integrated into neoliberal economic systems that, in turn, generated enormous disparities that fuelled the unrest.

"Here, the state is a participant, but not necessarily in the driver's seat," he said.

Riaz added that climate change caused by the Global North has compounded vulnerabilities in developing countries. At the same time, technology is increasingly deployed as a surveillance tool in smaller states. When these global pressures converge with domestic inequalities, crises emerge.

Citizens, therefore, must continually scrutinise state actions and examine whether government decisions are rational, Riaz said. The gulf between elites and ordinary people also demands urgent attention.

At the discussion, Democracy International Chief of Party Catherine Cecil said strong civic and political engagement at the local level is crucial for democratic resilience.

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NCP won't make any seat deals to go to power Says Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam yesterday said the party will not compromise or make any deal with any political party for seats or to go to power.

NCP may consider an alliance only with parties that are close to its ideology, and it is trying to nominate candidates for all 300 constituencies, he said at a press conference organised by the NCP's central election steering committee in Dhaka.

"Many newspapers are attempting to sideline NCP by circulating various rumours and baseless reports, despite the party's clear announcement that it intends to field candidates in all 300 constituencies," he said.

"Even if we fail to win a seat, our stance will remain unchanged," he said,

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Street vendors occupying a footpath and part of the adjacent road on Shaheed Abrar Fahad Avenue in the capital, forcing vehicles and pedestrians into a single narrow lane and causing heavy traffic congestion in the area. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Polling time, booths likely to increase

Date to unveil polls schedule in two to three days, says EC Masud

AHMED DEEPTO

Upon receiving the government's directive to hold a referendum alongside the upcoming 13th national election, the Election Commission has begun exploring measures to ensure both votes run smoothly.

Senior EC officials said holding the referendum and the election on the same day for the first time in Bangladesh should not pose major difficulties, though it may require setting up additional polling booths and extending voting hours.

They said the two votes will use separate ballot papers and the same officials overseeing the polls will be used in the referendum.

Contacted for comments on the preparations, Election Commissioner Abdur Rahaman Masud told this newspaper yesterday that the date to



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'You too can be made an accused'

Tajul warns defence during hearing at ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Crimes Tribunal Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam yesterday warned defence counsel Nazneen Nahar, who is representing Maj Gen (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan, that she herself could face charges.

It followed an argument between the two, requiring the tribunal chairman to intervene at least thrice to maintain order and calm the situation.

"Keep silent. Don't talk. You can also be an accused. We are receiving allegations against you from different places," Tajul snapped at Nazneen during hearing in a case against Ziaul at Tribunal 1.

He made the remarks after Nazneen, also sister of Ziaul, complained to the two-member tribunal that she had been barred from attending her client's interrogation at a safe house, despite legal provisions allowing a lawyer to be present. "I was not informed, and I was not allowed in."

Tribunal Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder intervened, reminding the chief prosecutor that Nazneen was appearing before the court as a lawyer.

Tajul alleged that Ziaul, accused of enforced disappearances, had been

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SINHA MURDER Ex-OC Pradeep was mastermind

HC observes in full verdict, says SI Liaqat executed the plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court, in the full text of its verdict, has observed that Pradeep Kumar Das, the then officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, was the mastermind behind the killing of former army officer Major (retd) Sinha Md Rashed Khan, while then sub-inspector Liaqat Ali executed the plan.

According to the full text, Liaqat fired four shots at Sinha with the intention to kill him. Later, Pradeep arrived at the scene and struck Sinha on the chest, causing two ribs to fracture, and pressed his boot onto the victim's neck to ensure his death.

"The trial court has correctly imposed the maximum punishment of death upon Pradeep and Liaqat," the HC bench of Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman and Justice Md Sagir Hossain said in the 378-page full verdict, released yesterday.

The bench made the observation after analysing and examining witness testimonies, prosecution materials, confessional statements, and circumstantial evidence.

Following the release of the full text, the convicts can



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