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CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY Inu's petition rejected, trial begins at ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday began the trial of former minister and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal president Hasanul Haq Inu in a case accusing him of committing crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

Inu, the lone accused, was present in the dock as prosecutors read out their opening statement, alleging that he fuelled state violence by repeatedly branding student protesters as BNP, Jamaat, terrorists and communal, and by endorsing curfews, army deployment and shoot-on-sight orders, including shooting from helicopters to kill protesters.

Eight charges, including abetment, conspiracy, aiding ruling party leaders and law enforcers and other crimes, have been brought against Inu.

The tribunal fixed the recording of depositions of the first prosecution witness for today.

Prosecutors said Inu, then a key partner in the 14-party alliance, coordinated with then prime minister Sheikh Hasina in imposing curfews and deploying military force against unarmed demonstrators.

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KHALEDI ILLNESS BNP postpones Victory Month programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has postponed its previously announced nationwide programme titled "Bijoyer Mashe Bijoy Mashal Road Show", marking Victory Day.

The decision was made in light of BNP Chairperson Khaledi Zia's illness, Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said at a press conference at the party's central office in Nayapaltan yesterday.

Earlier on Saturday evening, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced the party's month-long programmes for the Month of Victory.

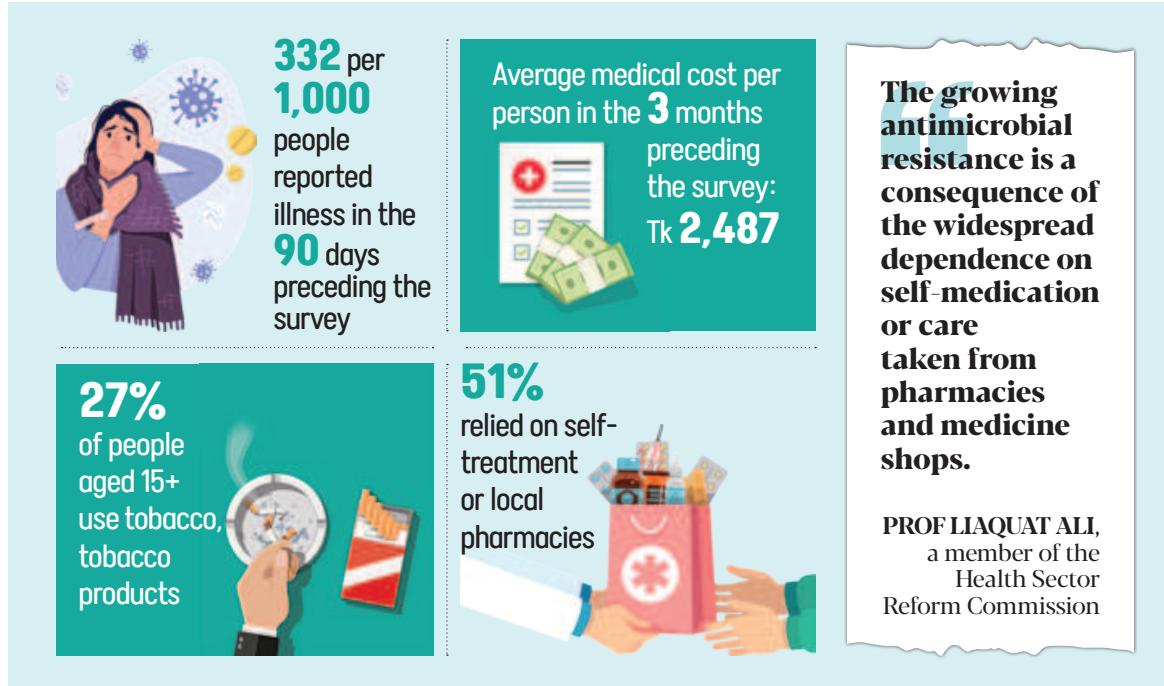
The programmes included a nationwide Victory Torch Roadshow, a grand rally on December 16 at Manik Mia Avenue, and a series of discussions and events scheduled from December 1 to 16.

Since her return from London on May 6, Khaledi has been undergoing regular check-ups.

The former prime minister was admitted to Evercare Hospital on November 23 on the advice of her medical board after being diagnosed with infections in her heart and lungs.

She is also suffering from pneumonia and is currently receiving treatment in the Evercare Hospital's Coronary Care Unit.

Khaledi, 80, has long been battling multiple health complications, including liver cirrhosis and kidney issues. She has a permanent pacemaker and has previously undergone stent placement for her heart.



Hypertension the most common illness in country

Peptic ulcer, diabetes follow, shows BBS survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hypertension is the most common disease in Bangladesh, with 78 out of every 1,000 people suffering from the non-communicable condition, according to a government survey.

Peptic ulcer is the second most prevalent illness, followed by diabetes, the survey found.

The survey also reported that one-third of respondents experienced some form of illness in the 90 days preceding the study.

The Health and Morbidity Status Survey-2025 said the average medical expenditure during this period was Tk 2,487, with over half of respondents relying on self-treatment or care from local pharmacies or medicine shops. The survey, by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, covered 1.9 lakh people from 47,040 households between November and December last year.

Mostafa Ashrafuzzaman, project director of the Improving Demographic and Health Statistics of Bangladesh Project, shared the findings at a programme yesterday at the BBS office in Dhaka. Officials said this is the second such survey since 2014, but many indicators cannot be directly compared due to changes in methodology.

The prevalence of illness was 332 per 1,000 population. Illness rates were higher among women, both young and elderly, compared to men.

Among women, 355 per 1,000 were reported ill, whereas among men the rate was 309 per 1,000. In rural areas, the rate of ill women

was 333 per 1,000, while in urban areas it was 331.

The findings show illness increases significantly with age. The rate was 232 per 1,000 among children under one. Among those aged 75 to 79 years, it rose to 744 per 1,000.

Peptic ulcer ranked second among the top 10 diseases, with 64 out of every 1,000 people suffering from it. The other major diseases are diabetes (43), arthritis (40), skin diseases (37), heart disease (31), asthma (31), osteoporosis (22), hepatitis (22) and diarrhoea (16).

HOW TO CONTROL HYPERTENSION

- Cut down on oily, processed foods
- Limit salt intake
- Eat more fruits, vegetables
- Stay active
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce stress

Average medical expenditure per person in the three months preceding the survey was Tk 2,487. Women spent Tk 2,576 on average, while men spent Tk 2,387.

The survey shows people depend more on self-care and informal healthcare than on institutional services. About 51.2 percent received self-treatment or care from local pharmacies. Around 20 percent sought private healthcare,

while only 11 percent went to government facilities.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Prof Liaquat Ali, a member of the Health Sector Reform Commission, said that the high reliance on self-treatment or on pharmacies and medicine shops indicates that the findings are largely based on patients' impressions.

He added that the growing antimicrobial resistance is a consequence of this widespread dependence on self-medication or care taken from pharmacies and medicine shops.

He, however, said, "Such surveys, conducted without proper diagnosis or review of medical documents and listing most common diseases, raise questions about their reliability."

Meanwhile, only 1.64 percent underwent routine health check-ups.

According to the survey, the overall caesarean delivery rate is 49 percent, with 53 percent in urban areas and 48 percent in rural areas.

Institutional delivery is steadily increasing. About 67 percent of deliveries take place under a physician's supervision, and 16 percent are attended by trained midwives or birth attendants. However, four percent are still conducted by untrained attendants, highlighting gaps in remote and underserved areas.

The survey shows the average expenditure per delivery at Tk 22,677, of which Tk 13,060 is spent on delivery alone. Average maternal care expenditure is Tk 26,360 in urban areas and Tk 21,554 in rural areas.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Politics turning into a money-making space

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Politics has now become a space for business interests where holding public office almost guarantees the accumulation of wealth, said Badul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagarik yesterday.

Speaking at a seminar at the Cirdap auditorium, he warned that if politicians continue to use state power for personal gain, the path towards democratic progress will remain uncertain.

The seminar was organised to mark the launch of a new platform called Voice Network. "Elected representatives are meant to serve the people. But when they end up serving themselves, citizens may once again be forced to rise," Badul said.

He also presented asset records of the mayors elected in the 2008 polls in Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet and Barishal city corporations. He said the Khulna city mayor's wealth increased by more than 14,500 percent within five years of taking office, Barishal mayor by 5,917 percent, Rajshahi mayor by 2,308 percent and Sylhet mayor by 608 percent over the same period.

Badul described the electoral landscape as unclean and said a kind of democracy had emerged that could be bought with money.

Prof Md Sahabul Haque of SUST delivered the keynote paper, while the session was chaired by Prof Md Jasim Uddin of Dhaka University.

AT A GLANCE

- Warning of increased use of illegal money, arms ahead of polls
- Allegations that recent appointments of DCs, SPs favour a particular party
- Speakers say voting rights now in ICU and must be restored
- Newly launched Voice Network unites 21 polls-monitoring groups

BNP Chairperson's adviser Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal urged election observers to examine whether it would constitute a violation of the RPO if advisers to the interim government contest the upcoming polls.

Former EC additional secretary Jesmin Tuli warned that use of illegal money and arms was likely to rise ahead of the next polls and called on the government and the EC to take early measures.

Ehsanul Mahbub Zubair, assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, said recent appointments of election officials, including DCs and SPs, had raised questions about whether the EC was leaning towards a particular political party.

Saiful Haque, general secretary of Biplobi Workers Party, said any attempt at electoral manipulation would mark a dark chapter for the country.

Ariful Islam Adib, senior joint convener of National Citizen Party, said people's voting rights had effectively ended up in the ICU in recent years and restoring those rights was now essential.

Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said those aligned with fascism and those who contested past dummy elections must be prevented from participating in the upcoming polls.

Organisers said the Voice Network brings together 21 registered election-monitoring organisations.

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