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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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KHALED A 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 Khaleda 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 Alangir 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, Khaleda 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.

Khaleda, 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.

Bay fish stock drops nearly 80% in 7 years

Survey blames overfishing as pelagic species decline

SUKANTA HALDER

Fish stocks in the Bay of Bengal have declined sharply in recent years due to overfishing, raising serious concerns about the sustainability of marine resources, according to a fisheries resource and ecosystem survey released yesterday.

The survey found that the stock of small pelagic species has fallen to nearly one-fifth of previous levels – down to 33,811 tonnes in 2025 from 1,58,100 tonnes in 2018.

This means pelagic fish, which live near the surface, have declined by 78.6 percent in seven years. The findings were shared at an event jointly organised by the FAO and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock at a hotel in the capital.

The latest results follow a 2019 survey by R/V Meen Sandhani, which concluded that marine fisheries were heavily exploited, with several species severely depleted. Highly exploited groups include Tiger shrimp, Indian salmon, and large croakers.

Abdullah Al-Mamun, assistant director of the Department of Fisheries and co-cruise leader of the survey, told



KEY FINDINGS

Number of trawlers rose from about 100 in 1985 to 273

Survey records new marine species new to Bangladesh

Jellyfish abundance rising sharply in coastal waters

Skipjack tuna confirmed inside economic zone

REASONS

Overfishing by expanded industrial trawler fleet

Improper use of fishing technology

Illegal, unregulated fishing in marine areas

Use of harmful nets; rising microplastic pollution

The Daily Star that overfishing is the main reason behind the current situation. In 1985, around 100 commercial trawlers operated in the Bay; that number has now risen to 273.

He said the decline in the number and size of commercially important fish is alarming, and urged the government to reduce the number of commercial trawlers to prevent further damage. Ecosystem disruption and environmental degradation have also contributed to the decline, he added.

The survey was conducted from August 21 to September 21 across Bangladesh's entire exclusive economic zone of 1,18,813 sq km.

It included oceanographic measurements, fisheries trawling, plankton and jellyfish studies, and microplastic sampling. The work is part of the EAF-Nansen Programme, carried out using the research vessel Dr Fridtjof Nansen with support from the FAO and Norway.

A previous Department of Fisheries report stated that the current management system allows excessive and increasing fishing pressure, and called for

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PHOTO: STAR

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 Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagarik (Shujan) 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," Badiul said.

At the event, he 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. Badiul described the electoral landscape as unclean and said a kind of democracy had emerged that could be bought with money.

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

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

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 Election Commission additional secretary Jesmin Tuli warned that the use of illegal money and arms was likely to rise ahead of the next parliamentary 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

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