



Salman, Anisul 'behind curfews, internet closure' Alleges prosecution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A defence lawyer yesterday urged International Crimes Tribunal-1 to discharge former prime minister's adviser Salman F Rahman and ex-law minister Anisul Huq in a crimes against humanity case linked to the July 2024 uprising.

The lawyer argued that both were innocent and had acted strictly within the rules of business.

Oposing the plea, the prosecution asked the tribunal to frame charges, citing audio recordings of conversations between the two during the student-led movement.

It alleged that they incited, abetted and planned violence, and were complicit in the killing of around 1,400 people and the injury of nearly 25,000 others.

After hearing both sides, the tribunal fixed January 12 for passing its order. The charges were brought on December 4 last year.

Defence lawyer Syed Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury rejected an allegation that Anisul, in a phone

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PHOTO: STAR

Students of Jagannath University queued near polling stations as voting in the JnUCSU polls took place from 9:00am to 3:30pm yesterday. According to university authorities, the student union election recorded a 65 percent voter turnout. Story on page 3.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES Systematic crime, not aberrations Says commission as it refutes officials' claims of innocence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Enforced disappearances in the country were not the work of rogue officers or isolated incidents, but a deliberate state-run campaign, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances said in its report.

Refuting claims of innocence by senior officials, the Commission said that evidence shows the operations were part of an organised state security framework – planned and coordinated across military, police, and intelligence services – making ignorance or justification on security grounds implausible.

Considering the persistence of these activities, the Commission said, both individual officers and the agencies they represented cannot evade responsibility.

The report, shared yesterday by the Chief Adviser's Press Wing, indicates that multiple agencies were involved, including the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), and National Security Intelligence (NSI).

These agencies not only carried out the detentions but also coordinated and concealed them, the report reads. Senior officers, including Lt Gen Akbar of DGFI, were directly implicated in authorising or sustaining unlawful detentions, it added.

A common defence by those implicated is that they did not personally order the abductions or carry them out, or that the detainees and facilities predated their tenure.

POLLS PREPARATIONS Govt to launch monitoring hub

Religious leaders to raise awareness on referendum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is setting up a central monitoring system to receive real-time information on any disruption or violence during voting.

The home ministry is working to set up monitoring control rooms at upazila, district, divisional and central levels to ensure rapid response, said Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary, at a press briefing yesterday to outline the government's preparations for the February 12 polls.

Asked about the security of candidates, he said the matter remains a priority and that protection is being provided based on assessed risk.

If anyone requires additional security at the local level, the police will assess the situation and take action accordingly.

Around 75 percent of the members from the police, Ansar, Border Guard Bangladesh and Coast Guard have already completed training.

Training on the use of CCTV and body cameras is also underway and expected to be completed by January 31, he said.

He pointed to the successful management of several large-scale events in recent weeks as evidence of the security forces' readiness.

"The confidence of our security forces is now stronger than ever."

Addressing concerns over doubts about whether the election will actually take place, Shafiqul said there are 37 days left and the government is fully prepared.

The government is also working with the religious affairs ministry to encourage public participation in the referendum.

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Temperatures plunge further in the north

Hospitals see rush of child patients as cold wave intensifies in 10 dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cold wave sweeping over northern Bangladesh has intensified significantly, disrupting the lives of poor and disadvantaged communities and hampering business activities.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department said a mild to moderate cold wave is currently occurring in 10 districts – Rajshahi, where the lowest temperature was recorded yesterday; Pabna, Bogura, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Rangamati, Jashore, Chuadanga and Kushtia – and may persist over the next five days.

The chilling weather and dense fog have brought these districts to almost a standstill, reports our district correspondents.

According to Met officials, the temperature may fluctuate over the next three to four days and is likely to rise from the 10th or 11th of this month.

In Rajshahi, the temperature fell from 10 degrees Celsius on Monday to 7 degrees Celsius yesterday, marking the lowest temperature of the season so far, according to the Rajshahi Meteorological Office.

While the elderly and children remain the worst affected, the cold has also created severe hardship for low-income people, particularly

outdoor workers.

Abul Bahar, a rickshaw puller from Rajshahi city's Bhadra area, said his work has become extremely challenging. "While it's already difficult with my hands and feet going numb, the number of passengers is also low and so there is almost no income."

Health experts warn that children from poor, floating, char and erosion-affected communities are the most vulnerable during winter due to inadequate warm clothing, nutrition and shelter, urging parents to seek medical help at the first sign of symptoms.

Amzad Hossain, a day labourer from the Talaimari area, said, "We aren't getting enough work because of the cold. It has become difficult to run the family during this winter. It is even worse when the sun does not come out."

Meanwhile, in Dinajpur, the temperature was recorded at 9 degrees Celsius, in Saidpur 10 degrees Rangpur 11.9 degrees,

and Kurigram's Rajarhat 10.5 degrees, said observatory official Jitendranath.

Rahena Begum, 60, of Sahapara village in Panchagarh's Boda upazila, said, "The severity of the cold has become difficult to bear, especially from evening till the next morning. I can't stay warm even if I have two or three blankets on me."

Anikul Chandra Barman, 55, of Moidandighi village in the same upazila, said it has become challenging to do necessary work in the crop fields, especially with strong cold gusts.

The Rangpur region has been experiencing the cold spell since December 23, with the minimum temperature fluctuating between 8.6 and 11.9 degrees Celsius, while district and upazila hospitals are filling up with child patients affected by cold-related illnesses.

Visiting the paediatric department at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, our correspondent saw a severe shortage of beds.

Some beds had multiple children sharing them, and most of the patients were between one and five years old.

Sabina Begum, a resident of the Tajhat area in Rangpur city, said, "My one-year-old child has been suffering from breathing problems

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- Command responsibility firmly established
- Political opponents disproportionately targeted during polls, unrest
- Evidence destruction highlights institutional failure
- No legal or security justification exists

The Commission rejected the arguments, stating that responsibility for the crimes cannot be confined to the original act. Enforced disappearance is a continuing crime; as long as a victim remains unlawfully detained and their whereabouts concealed, the crime persists, it said.

Officials assuming control over detention facilities inherit responsibility for ongoing violations.

The report cited the 2024 army inquiry into Brigadier Azmi's abduction, which concluded that subsequent commanders who maintained his detention were equally responsible.

Another claim is that senior officials were unaware of the disappearances.

The Commission also dismissed this, noting the scale, duration, and visibility of the practice made ignorance implausible. Enforced disappearances occurred nationwide over several years, affecting thousands of victims, documented in media reports, court proceedings, and family testimonies.

The Commission's framework for accountability does not require proving that an official personally ordered the abductions. It only requires proving that they knew, or should have known, of the ongoing violations and failed to act.

Testimonies, including those of Lt Gen Akbar, confirm that top officials were aware of these actions. Akbar admitted discussing the disappearance of Humam Quader with former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who instructed that the detainee be released, showing high-level knowledge and involvement.

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Grocer hacked to death on his way home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A grocery shop owner was hacked to death at Charsindur Bazar in Narsingdi's Palash upazila on Monday night.

The victim, Moni Chakraborty, 40, was a resident of Sadharchar Union in Shibpur upazila.

Like every day, he closed his shop around 11:00pm and was heading home when unknown assailants suddenly attacked him with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured, police said.

Locals rushed him to Palash Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead, said Shahed Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Palash Police Station.

Residential Medical Officer of Palash Upazila Health Complex Abdullah Al Mamun told The Daily Star that the victim had injuries to the back of his head.

"Primarily, it appears to be an injury caused by sharp weapons. He was brought to the hospital dead on Monday night, and the body was sent to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital for autopsy this morning [Tuesday]," he added.

The victim's father, Madan Chakraborty, said, "After closing the shop, my son was on his way to feed

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A passenger sits by the homeless people taking shelter on the platform of Kamalapur Railway Station, wrapping themselves in whatever clothing they can find to fend off the cold. A dog curled up nearby, seeking the warmth of human presence. The photo was taken around 2:00am yesterday, when the temperature in the capital dropped to around 14 degrees Celsius.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

11-year-old killed on father's orders Uncle who committed the murder confesses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An 11-year-old girl was murdered by her uncle in Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila, allegedly on the orders of the child's father, police said.



Victim's father

The victim, Ayesha Moni, was a fifth-grade student from Majheta village in Rangabali.

Md Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Rangabali Police Station, said the child's father had ordered the killing, according to the victim's paternal uncle Rubel Pyada, who confessed before Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Dolon Hasan under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure on Monday.

The court sent Rubel to jail following his confession, he said, adding that based on his statement, the child's father Babul Pyada was arrested the same night and sent to jail yesterday.

Police said Ayesha had learned about her father's extramarital affair and shared the information with her elder sister and mother, who is currently abroad.

Following this, Babul allegedly

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