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ICT verdict in Chankharpul killings today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 is scheduled to deliver its verdict today in a case over the killing of six people in the capital's Chankharpul area during the 2024 mass uprising.

Eight former police officials stand accused in the case. They are former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman; joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty; former additional deputy commissioner Shah Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam; former assistant commissioner of Ramna zone Mohammad Imrul; former Shahbagh Police Station inspector (operations) Arshad Hossain; and constables Sujon Hossain, Imaz Hossain and Nasirul Islam.

Of the accused, Arshad, Sujon, Imaz and Nasirul are currently in custody.

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A worker carries five gas cylinders on his bicycle while providing door-to-door delivery for his store. Due to a gas shortage and supply disruptions following two major pipeline accidents, demand for cylinders has surged, prompting store owners to charge Tk 2,000 instead of the fixed price of Tk 1,306. The photo was taken on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Land rights, legal recognition, for indigenous people

Demand speakers at nat'l seminar

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Constitutional recognition
- Land commission for plainland communities
- Indigenous representation in dev process
- Indigenous-friendly edn, healthcare
- Preserving indigenous languages, culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous leaders, rights activists and policymakers yesterday demanded constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples, a separate land commission for plainland communities, and urgent reforms to protect their land, natural resources and cultural rights.

The demands were raised at a national seminar titled "Rights to land, territory and natural resources of plainland indigenous peoples and the role of the government," organised by Kapaceng Foundation and Indigenous Peoples Development Services (IPDS) at the YWCA Conference Hall in the capital.

IPDS President Sanjeeb Drong chaired the seminar, while Kapaceng Foundation's Advocacy and

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

More and more misinformation and disinformation are flooding social media ahead of the election. To create voter awareness, we are running selective fact-check reports published by fact-checking organisations from today.

FACT-CHECKED

Old video, fake media card circulate with false claims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the national election approaches, social media platforms have been flooded with misleading content, including fake photocards and old videos circulated with false claims.

Two such pieces of election-related fact-check reports were published by fact-checking organisations Rumor Scanner Bangladesh and Dismislab yesterday.

According to the Rumor Scanner report, one widely circulated video has been shared under the title "President appeals to the nation over the election", claiming to show President Mohammed Shahabuddin delivering a message about the upcoming national election.

In the video, the president is heard saying, "I have an appeal to the people of the country."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

FEB 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-11
July frontman takes on local old guard

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAIQUE

Along Pragati Sarani – the lifeline of eastern Dhaka – stands the International Buddhist Monastery. During a recent visit, its vice-principal, Buddhanda Mahathero, prayed for national peace.

He recalled offering similar prayers in July 2024, when police assaulted students from two nearby private universities. Many of them had taken shelter inside the monastery that day.

The monk now hopes that those entrusted with running the state will work toward an inclusive society, irrespective of religion or caste.

The monastery falls within the Dhaka-11 constituency, which comprises Rampura, Badda, Bhatara, and parts of Hatirjheel police station.

The seat is witnessing a high-profile contest.

Nahid Islam, a prominent face of

Nahid Islam

MA Quayum

the July uprising and convener of the National Citizen Party (NCP), is contesting from Dhaka-11. He hails from Fakirkhali village in Badda thana.

Expectations surrounding the youth-led party are high.

Mahmuda Begum, 40, a resident of Poshchimpara in Nurachala, said, "This time, I am for the youth. I hope not only youth-led parties, but young candidates from all parties win."

A shopkeeper by profession, Mahmuda pointed to long-standing problems such as gas and water shortages and water logging. From the politicians of "New Bangladesh," she expects stability in commodity prices.

Nahid's main challenger is BNP candidate MA Quayum, a long-serving former commissioner of the Badda area.

As the country heads toward the February 12 elections, voters in Dhaka-11 – many casting ballots after a long gap – appear politically energised.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Torture and screams marked life at Aynaghar' Ex-army officer recounts ordeal at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Life inside a secret detention facility was filled with screams from adjoining rooms and constant threats of "crossfire", former Lt Col Hasinur Rahman, a survivor of enforced disappearance, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday.

Testifying as the second prosecution witness, Hasinur said screams and cries could be heard from every room of the detention centre, known as "Aynaghar."

Hasinur's testimony came in a case filed against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 12 others over the alleged illegal detention and torture of at least 24 individuals at a Joint Interrogation Cell operated by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence between 2016 and August 2024.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

82 lakh use illicit drugs in country BMU survey finds youth most affected

Cannabis was identified as the most widely used drug, with around 61 lakh users. It was followed by yaba (approximately 22.92 lakh users) and alcohol (20.20 lakh).

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An estimated 82 lakh people in Bangladesh currently use one or more illicit drugs, accounting for about 4.88 percent of the total population, according to a nationwide survey conducted by Bangladesh Medical University (BMU).

The survey also found that an average drug user spends up to Tk 6,000 per month, while the majority of substance users are young.

About 33 percent of respondents reported first using drugs between the ages of eight and 17, while 59 percent said they began between 18 and 25, indicating early exposure and high vulnerability among adolescents and youth.

Unemployment, peer influence, financial insecurity, family instability, mental stress, and engagement in informal work have been identified as the main risk factors for drug use.

Alarming, nearly 90 percent of users reported that drugs are easily accessible.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

3,000 leprosy cases detected annually

Stigma, funding gaps hinder elimination drive, say speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although Bangladesh achieved the elimination of leprosy as a public health concern around three decades ago, more than 3,000 new cases are still detected annually, highlighting the challenges in achieving zero prevalence of the disease.

Public health elimination of a disease means reducing its prevalence rate to less than one case per 10,000 population.

Health experts and officials have recommended an intensified drive, particularly in high-burden districts, to detect new cases and ensure patients receive treatment, aiming to achieve the zero-leprosy-prevalence target by 2030.

They also said leprosy patients are often surrounded by social stigma, making awareness campaigns involving all relevant stakeholders essential to make the country

leprosy-free.

The speakers made the remarks at a discussion organised to mark World Leprosy Day, observed yesterday.

The National Leprosy Programme of the Directorate General of Health Services hosted the discussion at the DGHS under the slogan, "Leprosy is Curable, the Real Challenge is Stigma."

In her keynote speech, Afsana Alamgir Khan, assistant director and programme manager (leprosy) at the DGHS, said the National Leprosy Programme started activities in 1985 in selected geographical areas and was expanded nationwide in 1996.

In 1998, the country achieved public health elimination, but 13 districts still bear a heavy burden of the disease, meaning the detection rate is as high as five per 1,000 population, she said.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Intensified detection, stigma reduction
- Mass screening in high-burden districts
- Adequate funding, surveillance, awareness
- Stronger govt-NGO coordination

A flock of egrets searches for food in the drying Khayrat haor at Karimganj in Kishoreganj as the setting sun reflects on the water, creating a mesmerising scene. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ