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Speakers at a roundtable, titled 'Advancing Indigenous Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Progress, Challenges, and Political Commitments,' at the CPD office in Dhaka yesterday. The event was jointly organised by the Nordic Embassies in Bangladesh, the Centre for Policy Dialogue, and The Daily Star.

PHOTO: STAR

CHANKHARPUL KILLINGS ICT verdict brings grief, not closure, for families

SHARIF ISLAM and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

For one and a half years, Sheikh Jamal Hasan counted each day, waiting for justice for his only son, Sheikh Mahdi Hasan Junaid.

Yesterday, that long wait ended, but not with relief. Instead, it brought a deep ache of dissatisfaction and grief.

The International Crimes Tribunal 1 delivered its verdict in the case over the killing of Junaid and five others at Chankharpul during the July 2024 uprising, leaving families with more sorrow than closure.

Standing outside the courtroom, Jamal struggled to hold back tears and anger. "My son brought a new sun and a new Bangladesh," he told reporters. "Now it feels as if he committed a crime. What kind of verdict is this? You tell me."

Junaid, along with five others, was shot dead by police in Dhaka's Chankharpul area on August 5, 2024, as police indiscriminately fired on students and people heading to the Central Shaheed Minar as part of the "March to Dhaka" programme.

The tribunal sentenced three accused senior police officers -- former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman, former joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty, and former additional deputy commissioner Shah Alam Mohammad Akhterul Islam -- to death.

Five other policemen received lighter sentences: former

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FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-13 Mugging woes, new promises and a race for change

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

An election procession began at Mohammadpur Beribadh, passed Mockbul Hossain College in Katasur, and ended in front of the Mohammadpur bus stand.

Nearby, students of Lalmatia Mohila College were discussing the upcoming polls. Although campaigning is in full swing, many of these first-time voters are still unfamiliar with the candidates contesting from Dhaka-13.

Speaking to them, it emerged that they are still assessing their options. "We want to know who is capable of bringing change," one student said.

Dhaka-13 comprises wards 28 to 34 of Dhaka North City Corporation, covering Mohammadpur, Adabor and Sher-e-Bangla Nagar thana.

The constituency includes areas such as Lalmatia, Asad Gate, Shyamoli, Beribadh, Dhaka Udyan, Bosila and Rayerbazar, as well as neighbourhoods around Bangladesh Betar, the National Institute of Neurosciences, the

Liberation War Museum and the Passport Office.

Talking to The Daily Star, residents identified mugging, teen gang violence, and drugs as major concerns. Illegal land grabbing and footpath encroachment were also frequently mentioned.



Mamunul Haque
Jamaat-led alliance
Bobby Hajaj
BNP

Md Ibrahim, 35, a businessman at Krishi Market and a resident of Tikkapara, said he hopes the market -- destroyed by a fire in 2023 -- will be rebuilt after the election.

"The affected traders have received nothing so far. I want the elected MP to resolve this," he told The Daily Star.

Nasir Hazari, a resident of Madrasa Road, said he is hopeful

about youth-led politics. "We are waiting for something new. We have a soft spot for the students' party, but they must stay away from corruption. A stable government is necessary for peace," he said.

The constituency also includes the Geneva Camp, home to around 30,000 voters, where permanent rehabilitation remains the core demand.

A member of the Stranded Peoples General Rehabilitation Committee, speaking anonymously, expressed doubt.

"Every government treats us like pawns. After the July uprising, many of our people are facing cases and jail. I don't think this government will solve our problems," he said.

Despite "eyewash" anti-drug drives, the trade continues, he added.

Camp residents, he said, will support whoever promises rehabilitation in their manifesto.

Rashed, a university student from Rayerbazar, said public safety should be the top priority. "I never saw previous MPs in the area. This

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Publish white paper on 'three zero' performance

TIB asks interim govt



STAR REPORT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has called for the publication of a white paper at the end of the interim government's tenure to inform the public about the extent to which the government, formed under the leadership of Prof Muhammad Yunus, has fulfilled its responsibilities in line with the internationally promoted concept of "three zero".

"Alongside the international advocacy surrounding the 'three zero' concept, I believe people of the country will want to know the extent to which responsibilities have been fulfilled nationally in relation to these three issues," said Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, while speaking at a human chain on Dhaka's Manik Mia Avenue yesterday.

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A cloud of smoke envelops the Aminbazar landfill site along the Dhaka-Aricha highway as household waste collected from nearby areas is burnt indiscriminately. Such activities contribute to Dhaka's continuous ranking among the world's most polluted cities, severely impacting the health of residents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Recognising indigenous rights key to peace in CHT Say speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recognising indigenous peoples and addressing long standing governance, justice, and human rights issues are essential for sustainable peace, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

They also highlighted persistent challenges in implementing the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord.

They said progress in the CHT is not merely a local concern but a national issue that requires political will, institutional reform, and genuine dialogue with all stakeholders, including the security forces.

The roundtable, titled "Advancing Indigenous Rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Progress, Challenges, and Political Commitments," was held at the CPD office in Dhaka.

The event was jointly organised by the Nordic Embassies in Bangladesh, the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), and The Daily Star.

CHT Affairs Adviser Supradip Chakma said recognition of hill peoples as human beings must come first.

"The majority has to recognise whether we are human beings. If we are human beings, then the process starts," he said.

He described demographic change in the CHT as politically driven rather than electoral.

"This is not election engineering, this is demographic engineering," he said, adding that the indigenous population has declined from 22 percent in 1971 to less than half today.

- ⦿ Fully implement 1997 CHT Peace Accord
- ⦿ Address land grabbing, strengthen land governance
- ⦿ Ensure justice, end impunity in CHT
- ⦿ Engage security forces in rights-based dialogue
- ⦿ Strengthen local institutions, administration

Criticising weak law enforcement and justice, he pointed to land grabbing and the repeated release of accused persons on bail. "Police arrest them, but the next day they are on bail. What can justice do then?" he asked.

He called for equity rather than equality

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July fighters get legal indemnity Govt issues ordinance



AT A GLANCE

Ordinance grants legal protection	No fresh cases can be filed
All cases linked to movement to be withdrawn	NHRC to assess allegations of murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has issued the July Mass Uprising (Protection and Liability Determination) Ordinance, 2026, granting legal protection and indemnity to students and people who took part in the movement that toppled the Sheikh Hasina regime in 2024.

The Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division of the law ministry published a gazette notification in this regard on January 25.

The draft of the ordinance was approved at an Advisory Council meeting on January 15.

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Jamaat, NCP allege election code breaches

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami and National Citizen Party yesterday alleged widespread violations of the electoral code of conduct ahead of the 13th national election and referendum scheduled for February 12.

Jamaat leaders claimed their female activists have faced harassment and targeted attacks in several areas, including incidents of veil removal, phone snatching, and alleged inaction by law enforcers.

"Assaults have been deliberately carried out on our activists over the past few days. They [female Jamaat activists] are being harassed, humiliated, and in some places, asked to remove their veils. Many have had their mobile phones snatched," Jamaat's Assistant Secretary General Ehsanul Mahboob Zubair told reporters following a meeting between a Jamaat delegation and the chief election commissioner at the Election Commission headquarters in Agargaon.

Such incidents are repeatedly occurring in the Dhaka-15, as well as in other constituencies in the capital and across the country, he added.

Zubair, also head of the party's

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