



DAY 7 August 4: Battlefield Jhigatola, rumours unfounded and internet slowdown

At least 150 people were injured in Jhigatola as 'BCL men' attacked students. Students had gathered there in huge numbers and in the afternoon. Rumours of four students getting killed inside Awami League's Dhanmondi office and four girls getting raped there spread like wildfire on Facebook. These rumours were later proved to be unfounded. Fake photos of dead bodies on the Dhanmondi Lake were also shared online. The government claimed that the Awami League's office in Dhanmondi had been vandalised and that rumours were being instigated by a third party. In order to disperse the crowd, a group of alleged BCL men attacked the crowd with sticks and iron rods, which were

removed from the dividers of the railings on the roads. An attacker was also seen brandishing a pistol. It was the first time in the week that so many students had gotten injured in the protest. In the end, a few students were taken inside the Awami League's office in a bid to dispel the rumours. The government also slowed down the speed of the internet and it wasn't possible for any one from the field to publish live videos. Furthermore, many journalists came under attack while trying to take photos and recordings of the attacks. Some were also detained by the police. A Channel 24 journalist was attacked in the middle of a live broadcast.

DAY 8 August 5: Protest recedes, law enforcers begin to take control

The attack on the students in the previous day resulted in fewer school students coming out onto the streets. However, the arrival of university students rejuvenated the protests. Like in the previous day, the Jhigatola-Dhanmondi neighbourhood turned into a battle zone with the police firing teargas shells at a procession which included thousands of students. The procession had begun at Shahbagh and it was making its way towards Jhigatola when the police and BCL activists stopped them. At least 30 students and a dozen photojournalists were injured. It was difficult for those on the field to take videos or click photos since they were threatened and assaulted, allegedly by BCL activists. However, the few videos which managed to hit the social media showed how

mercilessly the students and journalists were beaten. As the number of students started receding, law enforcers began to take a lot more steps. Detectives began detaining people who were reportedly instigating the protests. Renowned photographer Shahidul Alam was picked up at night. A number of other influential figures were cautioned. Meanwhile, the protests led to a huge number of people turning up at the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) for renewal of licenses and fitness certificates. A visit to the BRTA showed how people waited in long queues. On the other hand, it was also the first day of the Traffic Week, when police filed a total of 6,476 cases against traffic offenders.



DAY 9 August 6: Private university students attacked, draft law approved

The attacks in the last two days resulted in mostly empty streets in the capital. But there were plans for demonstrations at a few private universities. However, police personnel were ready on the spots in the morning along with a group of outsiders all equipped with iron rods and sticks. The attack started soon after. Students and teachers had to take shelter inside the EWU campus at Aftabnagar. The students and the attacking youths outside exchanged brick chips until about 4:00pm. Tear gas canisters were hurled at the students. Soon after the news of EWU attacks spread, few students from Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) headed for Aftabnagar. But police charged baton at them at the Hatirjheel area. Eventually a police team took position in front of the AUST campus in Tejgaon.

The incident at EWU, was further followed by attacks in Bashundhara R/A, with private universities—NSU and IUB—being specifically targeted. An armoured personnel carrier and about a hundred policemen—wielding sticks, shotguns and tear gas guns—entered the usually quiet residential area. Tear gas canisters engulfed everything in thick smoke. Tyres burned in the middle of the streets. In between the chaos, a micro bus came out of North South University with three or four students inside—all bleeding from pellet injuries—and sped towards Apollo Hospitals. Moments later, students carrying sticks and brick chips and chanting slogans trying to protest the attack were met with more teargas canisters. The entire incident left around 40 people injured, most of whom were students. Many were treated at Apollo Hospitals. Even at Dhaka University, police took measures to foil a demonstration of students who were protesting in solidarity of the road safety movement. They charged batons, fired tear gas shells and used water cannon at Shahbagh injuring at least five students. Whilst BRAC University was not attacked, a teacher



at the university said "Police were in position in and around the BRAC university campus, and outsiders had encircled the main building. It was under siege till around 3:00pm." Four more people were arrested from the capital for "trying to create unrest by spreading rumours on social media" instigating the student protest. Ruling-party Awami League filed cases against 1,200 unknown people over an attack at their party office. Shahidul, was produced in court 21hrs after he was picked up and placed on a 7-day remand. He said, he was beaten in custody and was made to wear his blood-stained Punjabi which was washed before he was brought to court.

As attacks went on all over the city, the cabinet approved a draft law that proposed a maximum punishment of five years' imprisonment for causing death by reckless driving. Road safety campaigners strongly criticised the draft law and termed the sentence insufficient to end anarchy on roads, while, truck drivers and transport workers staged demonstration protesting the draft Road Transport Act.

DAY 10 August 7: PM visits party activists, cases filed against protestors

While there were a few demonstrations outside Dhaka, the capital was more or less empty. A number of students from different universities were detained by the police the previous day. Many of them were released today. The police also lodged 29 cases against students, but none against the attackers. In addition to that, the Prime Minister visited the injured Awami League activists undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Ophthalmology. Shahidul Alam's arrest received criticism from all over the world, including the EU, and international rights bodies. At the same time, the High Court asked jail authorities to send him to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) for treatment. In addition, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu accused the US embassy for poking its nose into the politics of Bangladesh, after it issued a statement in favour of the protesters.

— STAR WEEKEND DESK PHOTOS: STAR FILE

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INFOGRAPHIC

STUDENTS PROTESTS: MAPPING THE VIOLENCE

