

Celebrities rally behind quota reform amid violent clashes

In the wake of recent violent clashes between student protesters and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists at Dhaka University, a wave of support from celebrities has emerged for the quota reform movement. The incident, which occurred on July 15, resulted in approximately 300 injuries, including female students and BCL members.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

As of July 16 (7:30pm), six people have been reported to be killed nationwide due to the ongoing clashes. The unrest spread to other public universities across Bangladesh, including Jagannath University, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University, Chittagong University, and Eden Mohila College.

As tensions escalated, prominent figures from the entertainment industry took to social media to express their views on the contentious issue. Their statements reflect a growing concern over the government's response to the students' demands and the use of force against non-violent protesters.

Veteran actor and freedom fighter Sohel Rana advocated for the quota's removal. He shared his opinion on his Facebook account, stating, "Freedom fighters fought at the call of Bangabandhu for independence... We achieved that immediately after the War. We freedom fighters have nothing more

secretary of Actors Equity Bangladesh, advocated for a nuanced approach to quota reform, "Quota reform is certainly possible. The quota for freedom fighters and their children will naturally become ineffective in a few years. A minimum honorary quota from the state for our valiant freedom fighters is necessary." However, Hasan also hinted at possible ulterior motives, noting, "The way this movement of thousands of students has been directed clearly indicates who the masterminds are."

Director Ashfaq Nipun showed solidarity with the students by sharing a powerful image of two female students being assaulted during the protests, simply stating, "Stand by the students."

Filmmaker Mishuk Moni expressed his sorrow over the violent scenes unfolding in the city. He criticised the government's tendency to label dissenters as traitors, saying, "In this country, speaking against the government labels you a traitor. Criticising any government official's corruption also makes you a traitor."

"Dhaka University is covered in blood. Why is it that blood has been spilled on our campus? I strongly protest against such acts."

Musician Ziaur Rahman of the Shironamhin band argued that the quota system may have outlived its original purpose. He explained,

suppressing dissent, saying, "Now, the exploited people are their nemesis."

Director Khijir Hayat questioned the judiciary's role, asking, "Can't the Appellate Division of the Honourable Court expedite their decision considering the current situation of the country, instead of delaying it for a

bravely confronting agitators and trampling the quota system. Mishu's caption reads, "No matter how lightly you take it, throw as many taunts as you like. We will take bullets with our chests out, we will break the system of 'quota'."

Actor Shohel Mondol criticised the government's tactics, describing them as "catching fish in muddy waters" and urged the public to cultivate social awareness to avoid being deceived by political machinations.

Niloy Alamgir made a heartfelt appeal to the prime minister, saying, "Honourable PM, today's students are tomorrow's future leaders. They can't all be wrong in their demands. As a freedom fighter's son, I urge you to reform the quota system."

Popular YouTuber and actor Salman Mohammad Muqtadir took a proactive stance, offering accommodation and assistance to students affected by the violence. He stated, "If there are any students who have been attacked or cannot enter their halls, I will try to manage accommodation for you. If you need a place to stay or require medical assistance, I am here for you."

Khairul Basar shared an emotional post with the photo of an injured female student, expressing his anguish: "She is my sister. My heart aches to see this! You are staining this divine campus, beloved Dhaka University, with blood. Do you ever reflect on your actions?"

Actress Pori Moni added her voice to the chorus of dissent by sharing a disturbing image of a female Dhaka University student being brutally beaten during the quota reform clash. The caption reads, "If you remain silent about violence against women, you are a hypocrite."

As the quota reform movement continues to gain traction, these celebrity voices add weight to the students' cause, highlighting the need for peaceful dialogue and reform. Their diverse perspectives reflect the complexity of the issue and the widespread concern over the use of violence against protesters.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"The quota system now only serves as a path for severe misuse. As a result, talented and qualified youth are losing their opportunities, forcing them to navigate their daily lives with frustration." He called for change, stating, "Let the youth be freed from the quota system. Let merit and qualifications be recognised."

Author and publisher Mohammad Nazimuddin offered a scathing critique of the situation, dismissing claims that the protesters were misled by opposition parties. He stated, "They are not naive or misled by BNP-Jamaat as they say. The real culprits are the vote-rigging thieves and sycophants!" Nazimuddin warned of the consequences of

month?"

Dhallywood actor Siam Ahmed expressed his dismay at the transformation of his alma mater into a battleground, questioning, "Why has my campus become a war front? Why are students being attacked?"

Noted actor Nasir Uddin Khan shared images of the brutal attacks on protesters, showcasing the extent of injuries inflicted during clashes with BCL leaders. His question cuts to the heart of the issue: "If the country is moving towards progress, then why is it that blood is shedding all over the place?"

Cartoonist Morshed Mishu took a creative approach to express solidarity with the protesters. He illustrated a student as a Hulk-like figure draped in the colours of the Bangladeshi flag,

to ask for." While acknowledging the system's past merit, Rana questioned its current relevance: "53 years have passed since the country's independence. At this point, neither freedom fighters nor their children are of age to seek government jobs. So, I don't see the need to keep the quota system active even now." He suggested the system might now serve "hidden self-interests," as it no longer logically benefits freedom fighters or their children.

Actor Rawnak Hasan, general

Participating in a movement for rightful demands makes you a traitor." Moni questioned the use of force, asking, "Why did BCL activists, wearing helmets and armed with sticks, injure students in the quota reform movement? The government could have sent representatives to negotiate with the students."

Ayman Sadiq, content creator and founder of 10 Minute School, strongly condemned the violence against protesters, expressing his dismay:



PHOTOS: COLLECTED



NEWS

AL, BCL men to take position at unit offices

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leaders and workers will also take position at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue as "striking forces" and will rush whenever and wherever needed.

"We don't want any confrontation. But we will also not allow anyone to block roads and carry out vandalism," said Dhaka South unit AL president Abu Ahmed Mannafi, adding that all BCL units under Dhaka City were asked to remain vigilant.

The city AL activists will lend law enforcers a hand to keep the situation under control, he added.

AL also has taken initiatives to ensure presence of different professional bodies on the streets to "counter insulting remarks against

freedom fighters and uphold the spirit of Liberation War," sources said.

Meanwhile, police were asked not to use force unless necessary.

Police have already increased vigilance and instructed its members to ensure security of all key infrastructures, public transport, government establishments and police establishments, police sources said.

They have been asked to take footage and photographs of agitations to identify any infiltrators. Police will later file cases against these "troublemakers and instigators".

Law enforcers will conduct raids and arrest the "troublemakers" once the situation returned to normal, according to police sources.

"We are working strategically to

keep law and order under control. Violence has been taking place in some places, but police are not using force and not taking a frontline position, as it may instigate the protesters," Dhaka Metropolitan Commissioner Habibur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

"A police sergeant and a constable got hurt, and the police outpost at Science Lab was vandalised but still we acted patiently and did not use any force," he said.

The protesters blocked 29 points in Dhaka, he said, adding, "Everywhere, we brought the situation under control by requesting the protesters and sometimes bringing local influential people and teachers to convince the students."

Govt cancels Tk 5cr fund

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public Facebook page with nearly 7 million followers on July 13.

The post was shared 6,400 times and generated about 2.5 lakh likes and 38,000 comments at the time of filing the report.

Sadiq, a graduate of the University of Dhaka's Institute of Business Administration, posted on the issue again on Monday, the day that Chhatra League activists swooped on quota protesters on the Dhaka University campus, leaving at least 300 people injured.

"Dhaka University is bloodied. Why is there blood on my campus? I protest," he posted.

Sadiq's post was followed by the official Facebook page of 10 Minute School changing its profile picture to a black screen, often used to express grief or solidarity with a cause or event.

About 16 hours after Sadiq's post, Startup Bangladesh on its official

Facebook page announced cancelling its proposed investment into IOMS.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, the state minister of ICT Division, the parent of Startup Bangladesh, made an identical post minutes later.

Palak and IOMS did not respond to The Daily Star's request for comment.

But in a dialogue organised by the Bangladesh Secretariat Reporters Forum at the secretariat yesterday, Palak said that disclosing the reasons for funding cancellation would breach the non-disclosure agreement signed by Startup Bangladesh with IOMS.

Asked if Sadiq's Facebook posts were the reason behind Startup Bangladesh's pulling out from the deal, Palak said: "Whoever the person or whichever the organisation, they must uphold the sovereignty of Bangladesh and the spirit of the Liberation War. Someone can be a successful entrepreneur, journalist, lawyer and have different political

ideologies, but there should be no debate on the Liberation War, Bangladesh, and the Father of the Nation."

"In that case, if anyone takes a stand or expresses opinions against the spirit of the Liberation War, there is a saying that even though the wretch is a scholar, he is abandoned," Palak added.

Startup Bangladesh was supposed to disburse the funds to IOMS over the next few days, according to people informed with the proceedings.

Founded in 2015 by Sadiq and Abdullah Abyad Raied, IOMS provides content material for school curriculum and skills development. It also offers a video library, preparation tips, model tests, and pre-scheduled live classes for admission preparation, competitive examinations, and university courses.

Until yesterday, IOMS raised \$7.5 million, including Tk 5 crore from Startup Bangladesh.

Television, and private TV channels will air special programmes while newspapers and online news portals publish supplements highlighting the significance of the day.

On the occasion, special prayers and discussions highlighting the significance of Ashura will be held at mosques and other places.

Govt moves SC to scrap HC verdict

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this policy decision, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told reporters at his office.

Replying to a question on whether his office will move the petition before the Appellate Division's chamber judge soon, the attorney general said the apex court is scheduled to hold a hearing on the petition on August 7.

In response to another question, AG Amin Uddin said he thinks that those who are instigating the students for the quota protests are diverting them in the wrong way for political agendas.

Even though the apex court has asked the students to place their arguments before the court, they are continuing their demonstrations, he said, adding that, "Nobody can change the apex court verdict."

Following a writ petition, the HC on June 5 this year declared illegal

the circular, issued by the public administration ministry on October 4, 2018, which cancelled the quota system in government jobs.

The circular said in the case of direct recruitment to the posts of 9th grade (formerly class-1) and 10th to 13th grades (formerly class-2), the appointments should be made based on merit.

The HC in the full text of the judgement, which was released on July 13, has also directed the government to restore and maintain the quotas for "districts, women, physically challenged people, tribes, minor races, ethnic groups and others, if any," and to publish a notification in this regard as soon as possible, preferably within three months from the date of receipt of this order.

The HC also said the government can change, reduce or increase the ratio or percentage of the quotas in

public jobs, if necessary, and can fill the vacant posts from the general merit list if any quota in government recruitment is not fulfilled.

Protesting the HC judgement on June 5, students staged demonstrations at different educational institutions, including Dhaka University. They took to the streets on July 1. Since then, the protesters have been continuing demonstrations, demanding reforms to the quota system through the formulation of a law.

On July 10, the SC delivered the status quo order following two separate petitions filed by the government and two Dhaka University students seeking a stay on the HC judgement.

"The impugned judgement of the High Court shall remain inoperative till that period," the Appellate Division said in the full text of its order.

Punctuality of Biman

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To improve efficiency, Biman has taken various measures including closing the check-in counters 60 minutes before the departure of international flights.

Biman is providing its employees training to increase its capacity in ground handling at the Dhaka Airport, the Biman officials said.

Mobile internet sluggish

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Jahangirnagar University, also said they were experiencing slow mobile internet connections.

Alin Khan Farhan, a student of Rajshahi University, said mobile internet connection was too slow to use around the campus area.

Multiple students from Jahangirnagar University, including Amit from the philosophy department, said mobile internet became slow in the evening, making it impossible to use social media or browse the web, adding that the slow speeds lasted till late last night.

However, even though the internet was slower, they said they were still able to make regular phone calls.

Ashura today

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the religion of peace and harmony, is a shining example in the history of humanity.

The day is a public holiday.

On the eve of Ashura, President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued separate messages, paying

deep respect to Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) and other martyrs of Karbala.

The president hoped that the great teachings of Ashura would reflect in the lives of all.

The PM, in her message, termed Ashura a very mournful, significant, and glorious day.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh