



Saudi-bound migrant workers in a bind

P3



Did we have to pay such a heavy price for this verdict?

P8



Australian involvement in the 1971 Liberation War

P10



Verstappen says he is no longer the leader of the pack

P11

SC VERDICT ON GOVT JOBS

93pc on merit, 7pc from quota

Govt to implement SC recommendations, circular likely tomorrow, says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday ordered major reforms to the quota system in jobs at government, semi-government and autonomous bodies, curtailing quotas to only seven percent from the existing 56 percent.

According to the SC order, 93 percent jobs in civil service will be merit-based.

The apex court also scrapped a High Court judgment that reinstated quotas in government jobs.

The seven-member full bench of the Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan fixed five percent quota for children of freedom fighters, martyred freedom fighters and Biranganas. One percent quota has been reserved for ethnic minorities and another one percent for

5pc for children of living and martyred freedom fighters and Biranganas

1pc for ethnic minorities

1pc for physically challenged, third gender

persons with disability and people of third gender.

In the short verdict, the top court made no mention of the grandchildren of freedom fighters.

If qualified candidates are not available from the fixed quotas, the vacant posts will be filled from the general merit list. But despite the court order, the government may cancel, amend or reform the quota system if necessary, considering the overall situation, it said.

This has been done to “ensure the principle of equality and representation of backward section of people in the republic’s jobs,” the SC order said, citing articles 19, 27, 28 (4) and 29 (3) of the constitution.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Army personnel stand guard in front of the main entrance to the Supreme Court around noon yesterday. Security was beefed up in and around the court as the Appellate Division during curfew hours held a hearing on a case regarding quotas in government jobs.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

‘Shutdown paused for 48 hours’

Say 3 protest leaders including Nahid; others say they’ll press on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three organisers of the quota reform protests yesterday suspended the “complete shutdown” programme for 48 hours while others said they would continue with it.

At a press briefing at the Gonoshasthaya Hospital last night, the three – Nahid Islam, Sarjis Alam, and Hasnat Abdullah – also issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the government to meet four demands – withdrawal of the curfew, reopening of all universities and their residential halls, restoration of internet services, and security of all coordinators of the protests.

Nahid said they suspended the shutdown and issued the ultimatum since there is a curfew and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

DEATHS OF STUDENTS Judicial body to unearth reasons

Hopes apex court in its observation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday hoped that the students would call off their demonstrations for quota reforms following its verdict in a quota-related case and return to their educational institutions.

The deaths of many people during the demonstrations were “unexpected”, observed the apex court while delivering the verdict.

It said it expects the judicial probe commission, led by a High Court judge, to unearth the reasons behind the deaths of the students and the government to take necessary legal steps against those responsible as per the recommendations of the commission.

The seven-member bench, led by Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan, requested the government to ensure necessary support to the commission so that it can perform its duty.

It also asked the government to help establish a favourable environment at educational institutions immediately.

According to the verdict, 93 percent government jobs would be based on merit while the remaining seven percent

recruitments would be on quotas.

The court said the 2018 government circular cancelling quotas in government jobs was reinstated when the Supreme Court issued a status quo on the High Court’s verdict on July 10.

Earlier, the High Court had declared the circular illegal.

“But our students could not properly realise the actual meaning of our order, resulting in different unwanted incidents and many deaths, which is in no way desirable,” it said.

The chief justice said they have asked the protesters to place their points before the court through their lawyers but they did not. However, two students, on the behalf of general students, appeared before the court seeking the scrapping of the HC verdict, he said.

The court asked the students to return to their educational institutions immediately and get ready to take on the great responsibility of the state in future.

It asked the chiefs of all universities, colleges, schools, and madrasas to immediately take necessary measures so that students can return to their institutions.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

TIMELINE

JUNE 5

High Court rules the 2018 government circular, which abolished the quota system, illegal, resulting in its reinstatement.

JUNE 9

The government challenges the HC rule with the Supreme Court.

JULY 4

SC rejects government’s appeal to stay the HC verdict.

JULY 9

Two Dhaka University students file petition, seeking a stay on the HC verdict.

SEE PAGE 2

At least 7 killed, on 2nd day of curfew
Six others injured in previous days’ clashes die in hospitals

STAR REPORT

At least seven people were killed and dozens wounded in the capital and two other districts in sporadic clashes between law enforcers and agitators on the second day of nationwide curfew yesterday.

Meanwhile, six more people, who were injured in earlier clashes, died yesterday, police and hospital authorities said.

Most of the victims were hit by bullets.

On Saturday night,

the government extended the nationwide curfew till further notice to tackle the ongoing violence centring the quota protest.

The curfew was declared and army personnel were deployed on Friday to assist the civil administration in ensuring national security and protecting lives and public properties.

For the second day, members of the armed forces were seen patrolling different points in Dhaka and other districts yesterday.

Of the seven killed, five were brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital from Sign Board, Chittagong Road and Dhania areas of the city, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in charge of DMCH police outpost.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

3hr break in curfew from 2pm today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ongoing nationwide curfew will remain in force until further notice with a three-hour break from 2:00pm today.

From now on, the home ministry will decide about curfew in Dhaka city, Dhaka district, Narayanganj city, Narayanganj district, Gazipur city, and Gazipur and Narsingdi districts.

Considering the situation, district magistrates and police commissioners of the metropolitan areas will make decisions whether the curfew will remain in force in their respective areas.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said this during a press briefing after a meeting with the representatives of the law enforcement agencies at his Dhanmondi residence last night.

He hoped that the law

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Picked up early Saturday, Nahid returns battered

ZIAUDDIN SHIPLU and
SAIM BIN MUJIB

Nahid Islam, a key organiser of quota reform movement, alleged he was “tortured physically” until he was unconscious.



In the early hours Saturday, he was picked up allegedly by law enforcers from a house in the capital’s Sabujbagh.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nahid said, “After taking me into a room, they interrogated me over the student movement. They tortured me mentally and physically. At one point, I lost consciousness.”

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

A father wails as he carries his bullet-hit son to a hospital in the capital’s Matuail yesterday afternoon.

US PRESIDENTIAL POLLS

Biden quits race amid criticism

Endorses Kamala Harris to replace him

AGENCIES

US President Joe Biden has withdrawn from the presidential race amid growing calls by his Democratic peers, reports BBC.

He said he would speak to the nation later this week in detail about his decision. He has backed his running mate Kamala Harris, the vice president, to replace him.

Biden faced growing calls to quit the race after a devastating debate earlier this month where he struggled to find words to reply to Republican candidate Donald Trump.

Though he tried to remain defiant, in recent days, a growing number of heavyweight Democrats, including former House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Representative Adam Schiff, joined the call.

According to a White House source, Pelosi reportedly told Biden he cannot win the Nov 5 election.

Schiff said in a statement on Wednesday that he has “serious concerns” about whether Biden can defeat Trump, the first Democrat to come out after the Saturday assassination attempt against the former president.

In a post on X, formerly known as



Twitter, Biden said, “My fellow Democrats, I have decided not to accept the nomination and to focus all my energies on my duties as president for the remainder of my term. My very first decision as the party nominee in 2020 was to pick Kamala Harris as my vice president... Today I want to offer my full support and endorsement for Kamala to be the nominee of our party this year. Democrats - it’s time to come together and beat Trump. Let’s do this.”

In another statement issued by Biden, he said, “It has been the greatest honour of my life to serve as your president. And while it has been my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interests of my party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as president for the remainder of my term.”



Left, as one policeman aims his rifle at agitators ahead, another wipes his sweat during clashes that went on for hours in the capital's Matuail yesterday afternoon. Right top, the agitators opposite the policemen use a gas tanker as a barricade between them and the cops. Right bottom, a police tow truck that was set ablaze on Saturday is yet to be removed from a road in Matuail.

PHOTO: STAR

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



PROTESTS IN BANGLADESH US issues travel alert for its citizens

AFP, Washington

The US State Department has warned Americans not to travel to Bangladesh and said it is allowing voluntary departure of non-emergency US government employees and their families from the country rocked by protests.

Travellers should not visit Bangladesh due to the ongoing unrest in Dhaka, the department said on Saturday in an advisory that escalated its advice of "reconsider travel" from earlier in the day.

The State Department is allowing the voluntary departure of non-emergency US government employees and family members, the advisory said.

TIMELINE

JULY 10
SC orders status quo on the quota issue for four weeks.

JULY 11
HC says the government can change, reduce, or increase the ratio or percentage of quotas.

JULY 14
HC publishes full text of its verdict.

JULY 21
The Appellate Division of the SC scraps HC verdict that reinstated the quota system. It sets new quota percentages at -- 93 for merit-based hiring; five for the children of living and martyred freedom fighters and Biranganas; one for members of ethnic minorities; and one for those with physical disabilities and "third gender" persons.

3hr break in curfew from 2pm today

FROM PAGE 1

and order will be normal within a day or two. He urged people to have patience till then.

The minister alleged that BNP-Jamaat carried out vandalism across the country to capture power taking advantage of the quota reform demonstrations by students.

He claimed that students accepted the decision of the Supreme Court that fixed 93 percent recruitment based on merit.

Judicial body to unearth reasons, take legal steps

FROM PAGE 1

The court urged parents to tell their children to return to their institutions and focus on studies.

It said the students are the future of the country and that they would one day take on responsibility of the judiciary, the executive, and the legislative.

"They have to uphold the spirit of the Liberation War and the independence in their thoughts and minds; and only then the country will not deviate from its goal. Our motherland, established by the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, will survive," the court said.

"The martyrs and the freedom fighters are the brightest sons of the soil. We achieved the red-green flag thanks to their sacrifice. The nation will not accept anything disrespectful towards them. Everybody should be careful so that no one fails to pay the due respect to the sacrifice of the valiant freedom fighters," it said.

93pc on merit, 7pc from quota

FROM PAGE 1

The verdict comes amid violent unrest centring quota reform movement.

More than 140 people, including seven yesterday, have been killed and several thousand injured since Tuesday as law enforcers joined in by ruling Awami League men clashed with protesters in Dhaka and elsewhere. The sheer scale of the violence prompted the government to impose curfew and deploy armed forces across the country.

After 2007, when emergency was declared, this is the first time that the government deployed members of armed forces in aid to civil administration, except during elections.

"We firmly believe that the students will withdraw the quota movement after the verdict and order," said Justice Obaidul Hassan in the observation.

The court asked the students to return to their institutions immediately. It also asked the government to ensure a congenial atmosphere at educational institutions across the country.

'CIRCULAR TOMORROW'
Law Minister Anisul Huq said they will implement the judgment, and a circular in this regard is expected by tomorrow.

At present, there are 20 grades in government job, and the quota system was applicable to 13th-20th grade following a 2018 government circular, which abolished the quota system in 9th-13th grade (Class-I and Class-II) government jobs.

Contacted, Anisul Huq said yesterday's SC order will be applicable to 9th-20th grades. "There is no quota system in 1st- 8th grades of government job. So the quota in 1st-8th grades was not considerable here [in the verdict]."

But Public Administration Minister Farhad Hossain said they will analyse different angles of the court order.

"My initial understanding of the short verdict is that a new quota

system will be applicable to all grades. But we will analyse different aspects and issue a clear circular by Tuesday," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

An organiser of the student movement said they consider the verdict a positive move, but they will not make any comment until the government issues a circular clearing everything up.

Another organiser in a text message to media outlets said the SC verdict was unclear and "left enough room for confusion among the public."

QUOTA PROTEST TIMELINE

In October 2018, the government through a hastily issued circular cancelled the quota system in jobs of 9th to 13th grades amid a quota reform movement at different universities.

The students never wanted its abolition, they demanded that it be revised down.

At the time, there was a 30 percent quota for freedom fighters' children and grandchildren, 10 percent for districts, 10 percent for women, five percent for ethnic minorities and one percent for physically challenged people.

The government decision to abolish the quota system was challenged in the High Court by seven children of freedom fighters. In response, the HC on June 5 declared the government circular illegal, essentially reinstating the 56 percent quota.

The HC verdict triggered a student protest on public university campuses in Dhaka and subsequently in other districts.

Students from private universities, colleges and in some cases from schools joined the movement across the country.

Protests intensified after the Supreme Court on July 4 declined to issue a stay on the HC verdict, triggering a massive one-point movement for quota reform.

After three days of nationwide movement, the SC gave a status quo on the HC verdict and set August 7

for hearing. The decision did little to pacify the protesters.

The movement turned violent after Chhatra League men attacked the agitating students on Dhaka University and some other universities on July 15.

The attack came hours after Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said BCL "would give a fitting reply to those student leaders of the quota movement who labelled themselves as Razakars and were arrogant."

Violence escalated further on the following days after the killing of several students during their clashes with law enforcers and pro-government activists, who were seen attacking the students with iron pipes, rods, sticks and hockey sticks in Dhaka and elsewhere. Some of them also opened fire on the protesters in and outside the capital.

In the wake of the situation, the government requested the top court to hold an early hearing as death toll continued to rise.

THE VERDICT

Yesterday, the court sat around 10:20am amid heightened security in and outside the SC premises, with army, Rab and police personnel taking position at key points.

After dealing with two other cases, the bench started hearing the much-talked-about case with several senior lawyers seeking to place arguments on behalf of the students.

The court allocated five minutes for each after Attorney General AM Amin Uddin started his arguments seeking to scrap the HC verdict.

Then nine SC lawyers placed their arguments.

The court also heard the arguments from the counsels of the original writ petitioners as well as the two students of Dhaka University who challenged the HC verdict.

The arguments took place for around two and a half hours, and the bench took a 40-minute break before delivering the judgment at a jam-packed courtroom around 1:30pm.

The court disposed of the two leave-to-appeal petitions, saying the June 5 HC is scrapped.

The bench said although setting quota is a "policy matter of the state", they, considering the overall situation, were applying article 104 of the constitution for "complete justice."

Article 104 allows the Appellate Division to issue such directions, orders, decrees or writs for doing compete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.

The court also directed the government to issue a circular in this regard immediately.

Other six judges of the bench are Justice M Enayetur Rahim, Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam, Justice Md Abu Zafar Siddique, Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim, Justice Md Shahinur Islam and Justice Kashefa Hussain.

THE ARGUMENTS

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin and Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Secretary Shah Monjurul Hoque placed arguments for the government and the two Dhaka University students who filed the leave-to-appeal petitions challenging the HC judgement.

Senior Advocate Md Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury argued for the writ petitioners who challenged the legality of the 2018 government circular.

Besides, senior lawyers Tanya Amir, Ahsanul Karim, Sara Hossain, ZI Khan Panna and Tanjib-UI-Alam placed statements on behalf of the protesting students.

The court also heard former attorney general AF Hassan Ariff, SCBA President AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, former SCBA President Zainul Abedin and lawyer Md Eunus Ali Akond.

The attorney general appealed for scrapping of the HC verdict.

He said the HC verdict was self-contradictory as it upheld the reservation of 30 percent quota for freedom fighters' children and at the same time said the judgement will

not prevent the government from changing, reducing or increasing the quota.

It is a policy matter of the government whether to keep quota. Therefore, the HC cannot interfere in policy matters, he said.

The constitution does not permit the HC to order the government.

Advocate Shah Monjurul Hoque said the HC verdict did not discuss why it interfered in the government's policy matter, and is hence liable to be scrapped.

The HC judgement is wrong as it termed freedom fighters as "a backward section of citizens" though there is no definition of the term, he said.

Tanya Amir said freedom fighters and their children and grandchildren are not backward citizens.

Rather, they are the most respected and dignified citizens of the country, she said, adding that the writ petition, on which the HC delivered the verdict, is not maintainable.

Sara Hossain said the quota system should be reformed to eliminate discriminations.

Lawyers AF Hassan Ariff, Zainul Abedin, Mahbub Uddin Khokon, Ahsanul Karim Tanjib-UI-Alam, ZI Khan Panna placed their arguments in favour of scrapping the HC judgement.

Advocate Munsrul Hoque Chowdhury opposed the leave-to-appeal petitions, saying that freedom fighters and their children suffered a lot for 21 years since August 15, 1975.

There was no illegality in the HC verdict in treating them as a backward section of citizens, he said.

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan told him that the constitution does not define "backward section" of citizens.

Mahbub Uddin Khokon said so many lives could have been saved had the government moved the leave-to-appeal petition before.

The chief justice asked him not to place any political arguments before the court.

discriminations movement panel."

About the three coordinators meeting the ministers and their demands, Nahid said, "My opinion was that we shouldn't go for any dialogue and the situation was not favourable for it. If the government takes steps to ensure our safety, then we'll decide.

"I believe they met the cabinet members in the face of pressure or to avoid any untoward situation. They said they only placed their demands but didn't have any discussion. They said the media misquoted them."

He said he will make further comments on the movement after sitting with the other coordinators and protesters.

"If the campuses are declared open; law enforcers are removed from the campuses and our safety is ensured, only then we'll make the final statement regarding our movement."

Regarding the Appellate Division's verdict yesterday, he said the SC "only gave a recommendation".

"But it's up to the government to decide whether the quota [percentages] will be increased or decreased. Until the government issues a circular or policy in this regard, it's not finalised ... We'll make a comment regarding it once the government decision is given.

"We saw bloodshed, were harassed, many were killed, thousands of students and police personnel were injured ... So much damage was done during this movement ... These need to be addressed."

Nahid further said, "We demand justice for the victims of the killings and demand legal action against and the expulsion of the Chhatra League men. These would be among our demands."

His father Badrul Islam said after they came to know his son was picked up by the plainclothes persons, he went to the office of the Detective Branch of police but they did not give him any information.

"They only kept our phone numbers, saying they would let us know once they find out about Nahid's whereabouts. Then we went to Khilgaon Police Station to file a GD, but they did not take it into cognizance."

Meanwhile, Faruk Hossain, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said, "We have no information about this [Nahid being picked up]."

The Daily Star contacted Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan for his comments of the allegations of torture made by Nahid but he cut the line as soon as he heard the question.



Nahid Islam shows one of the deep bruises he sustained during the torture.

traceless or went to safe place or were picked up. That's why we aren't being able to reach a common decision.

"I communicated with them [the three protest organisers who met three ministers] till around 10:00pm [on Friday]. However, since then I

haven't been able to contact them."

He said he later came to know that different sets of demands were issued.

"I think to avoid the situation, they gave varying statements or took their own different steps. But those do not represent the entire anti-



শরী'আত্ খিতিক ট্রেনলসী ব্যাংকিং সেবা



পূবালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি
PUBALI BANK PLC.

Open your
Account
from anywhere



PI Banking -
a Pubali Bank apps

Islamic Banking services are provided through online from all our branches and sub-branches

QUOTA VERDICT 'It's a victory for govt, not students'

Says GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Jatiyo Party Chairman GM Quader yesterday said the Supreme Court verdict regarding the quota system in government jobs reflects the government's wish, not the students'.

In an instant reaction, the JP chief said, "The government has won in the Supreme Court verdict as it has fulfilled its demand."

"On the other hand, demand of the students who have been waging movement against all kinds of discrimination in the government jobs, has not been fulfilled," GM Quader told The Daily Star over the phone.

"What the students demanded, were not

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

'Step down and give people relief'

Fakhrul urges govt

UNB, Dhaka

B N P Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday urged the government to step down to give people relief from the current violent situation.

Speaking at a press conference at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office, he also urged the government to stop its "evil" efforts to put the blame onto BNP and the opposition parties for the violence by using the media.

Fakhrul also said media outlets are running "made up" statements of some arrested leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, AMRAN HOSSAIN



A relatively calm Dhaka

People throng shops to restock essentials, pay power, gas bills on second day of curfew

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN
CHANDAN

After days of endless violence, parts of Dhaka were relatively calm yesterday, the second day of the ongoing curfew.

Many ventured out of their homes to buy groceries, essentials and restock supplies.

Although the curfew was lifted for two hours, from 3:00pm to 5:00pm, people started coming out early in the morning to finish incomplete business or run errands.

Most of them thronged kitchen markets, grocery stores,

or utility offices.

People had to wait in long queues to compete purchases at grocery stores and markets.

A grocery customer, Rubaya Islam, said, "The price of each product was higher than the previous day... Consumers are still willing to pay the extra buck. However, due to dwindling supply, there is no guarantee that the product would be available when a customer reaches the end of the queue. I feel like I am living in a city under siege."

The shopkeepers, however, blamed supply shortage for the price hike.

Md Anwar Hossain, a grocery store owner at Mohammadpur Town Hall market, said, "We could not replenish our stock in the last six days. Many of my fellow shop owners could not even open their shops as their supplies have run out."

"Whenever we open our shop, hundreds of customers come to us and buy whatever they can at whatever the price we ask for. There is no time for bargaining. My stock will also run out in the next two days, if new supplies do not arrive by this time," he added.

Due to the internet shutdown, prepaid consumers who usually

recharge their power and gas meter cards either via MFS, such as bKash or Nagad, or recharge vendors, had to wait in long queues instead for several hours at gas and power offices.

This was the scenario in front of DPDC and Titas Gas offices.

Shahriar Khan, a resident of Gopibagh area, said, "My prepaid electricity and prepaid gas will run out of balance soon. If I don't pay the bills today, there will be no electricity and gas in my house tomorrow. As there is no internet connection, I could not pay via apps."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Veggie prices skyrocket amid curfew

Green chilli now as high as
Tk 800 per kg



SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of vegetables including potatoes, onions, and green chillies have increased significantly in Dhaka markets due to a supply shortage amid the countrywide curfew.

Price of green chillies increased to Tk 600 per kg yesterday from Tk 300 per kilogram on Friday. Onion was sold for Tk 120 per kg yesterday compared to Tk 110.

As usual, the customers are feeling the pinch. In Nakhal Para Kitchen market, Tuhin Shubhra, a private service holder, asked a trader how much 250gm of green chillies cost.

After doing some calculation, the trader replied, "It's Tk 150."

"I couldn't believe what I was hearing," said Tuhin. Then he bought 100gm of green chillies for Tk 60.

Nilotpaul Datta, bought eight pieces of green chillies from Hatirpool Kitchen market for Tk 20.

He also bought 250gm of tomatoes for Tk 70 from the same place.

Some traders were charging more than Tk 600 for a kg of green chilli in some markets.

"I was in utter disbelief when the traders said the cost of one kg green chilli is Tk 800. Then, I bought 250gm of green chillies for Tk 200," said Wasim Hasan, who shopped at Shukrabad kitchen market.

Supply of most vegetable items declined by two to three times in the past two nights, said Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Sujon, general secretary of Karwan Bazar Arot Malik Byabshayi Samity.

However, carrying food items does not violate curfew rules.

Still, some truckers were demanding double the normal fare to transport vegetables, claimed Saifur.

In a normal night at Karwan Bazar, unloading of vegetables from trucks coming from various parts of the country start at 10:00pm and continue till 2:00am.

Wholesale selling of vegetables start at the same time and continue till dawn.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

CANCELLATION OF FLIGHTS

Saudi-bound migrants in a bind

RASHIDUL HASAN

Uncertainty looms over the fate of hundreds of Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrant workers as Saudia airlines cancelled multiple flights following the countrywide internet shutdown since Thursday night.

Saudia, national flag carrier of KSA, cancelled around 10 flights since early Friday.

Amid the situation, the stranded migrants are uncertain regarding their being able to go back to their workplace, as many of their visas are set to expire within two-three days.

"I was supposed to fly for Saudi at 3:00am on Saturday. But after arriving at the airport, the Saudia authorities informed us that the flight has been cancelled," Abdullah Al Mamun who came back to the country on a three-month leave, told The Daily Star.

"My visa will expire within three days. I will lose my job if I cannot return on time," Mamun from Cumilla added.

After failing to return to the KSA, an anxious Mamun and hundreds of other migrants yesterday thronged the head office of Saudia at the capital's Sonargaon intersection.

They conveyed their anxiety and grievances to Saudia officials, as many were afraid they wouldn't be able to return



Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrant workers throng the head office of Saudia at the city's Sonargaon Intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

to KSA before their visa expires.

Rajib Ahmed of Keraniganj said, "I came to Bangladesh on a six-month leave. My flight was on early Saturday, but when I arrived at the airport, I came to know the flight was cancelled due to the internet outage."

The officials of Saudia noted down our names, flight dates, and dates of visa expiry, said Rajib, who has been working in Saudi Arabia for seven years.

Rajib said his visa will be expired after seven days.

A Saudia official, wishing anonymity,

said they are arranging a special flight for those whose visa will be expired within one or two days.

"We have noted down the names and other necessary information of the passengers and will try to arrange flights accordingly so that nobody is affected," he also said.

Saudia officials hoped that the internet situation will become normal soon and they will be able to start flight operations normally.

Like Saudia, passengers of some other foreign carriers have also been facing problems due to flights being cancelled or delayed due to the blackout.

Several hundred incoming and outgoing passengers at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka faced severe troubles in this connection.

Many of the passengers got stranded at the airport or had to stay outside the airport, as the international flights were either delayed or cancelled due to technical glitch related to global Microsoft flight data and lack of passengers amid road blocks by the demonstrators in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country over the last three days.

Sources at the HSIA said 16 international flights were either delayed or cancelled in the 72 hours until 6:00pm yesterday.

Apologise for all deaths

33 eminent citizens ask govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government must apologise unconditionally to citizens for all the deaths of protesters since July 16, said 33 eminent citizens in a statement yesterday.

They added that law enforcers must engage cautiously and non-violently with students and all citizens.

The statement reads that Bangladesh has become a "death valley" since July 16, when miscreants launched vicious attacks to suppress the quota reform protests in Dhaka University. When students and citizens from all walks of life took to the streets protesting that vicious attack, Abu Sayed, a student in Rangpur, was shot in the chest and murdered in cold blood, it added.

Afterwards, many people like Sayed have been killed by the police, BGB, APBN or by the criminals unleashed by the ruling party, as per the statement.

The statement also said, "The helicopters are throwing sound grenades and tear shells from above, which have also injured many people. The ruling party thugs are even creating obstacles for wounded people to get treatment."

Such an inhuman and catastrophic situation is unprecedented in Bangladesh, it added.

The signatories include Shahidul Alam, renowned photographer and founder of Drik, Professor Salimullah Khan, Professor Tanzim Uddin Khan, Barrister Rashna Imam and retired Justice Abdul Matin.

**Law enforcers
must engage
cautiously and
non-violently
with students
and all citizens.**



Army personnel stand guard on a road in the capital's Mohammadpur area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

RECENT DEATHS Probe body holds first meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman, chief of the judicial probe commission investigating the deaths and violence during the recent quota protests, yesterday held a meeting with Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain.

The meeting was held at the Supreme Court conference room at 4:00pm to devise the work plan for the inquiry, said Md Shafiqul Islam, public relations officer of the SC.

On July 18, the government formed the one-member inquiry commission.

General holiday for SC today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan declared general holiday for the Supreme Court today.

On Friday, the chief justice declared general holiday for subordinate courts across the country yesterday and today in line with the government announced holiday, SC sources said.

PRISON BREAK Tk 50,000 announced for info on looted arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Narsingdi

A Tk 50,000 bounty has been announced for anyone who will be able to provide information on the arms and ammunition looted from Narsingdi District Jail.

Narsingdi SP Mostafizur Rahman made the announcement yesterday.

On Friday, some 826 convicts fled from the district jail when the prison came under an attack, while 85 rifles, 7,000 bullets, and 19 shotguns were looted, among other stuff.



‘CUSTODIAL TORTURE’ IN CTG

Bruised, student shares ordeal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Family members of quota reform protester Nazmul Hosen, a student of Chattogram Govt City College, couldn't trace him for a day after police detained him on Thursday.

They only learned about his whereabouts after a nurse of a local hospital informed them that Nazmul was taking treatment there.

Nazmul is now admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital with bruises all over his body after allegedly being tortured in police custody.

Visiting CMCH's orthopedic department, this correspondent saw Nazmul in pain with injuries to his back, hand, thighs and knees.

"Blood is coming out of his rectum, which is a sign of severe internal bleeding," said a doctor there requesting anonymity.

Nazmul alleged that he was tortured twice – first at Shah Amanat Bridge police box and then at Kotwali Police Station.

Nazmul claimed that police tortured him to make him confess about his involvement with Shibir, a pro-Jamaat student group. They increased the torture when he refused to comply with their order.

On the hospital bed, Nazmul said, "Police detained me from the petrol pump after a clash. They shoved me to the ground and started kicking me. At one stage, as I told them that I am a student, some senior officers intervened and told their subordinates to stop

the beating."

"Still, some police men took me inside a police box and used sticks to beat me. They wanted me confess that I was a Shibir activist," Nazmul continued.

Nazmul said, at one stage of the torture, he lost consciousness. "I discovered myself at Kotwali Police Station when I regained my senses," he added.

But his ordeal didn't stop there. "Two policemen again tortured me [at Kotwali Police Station]. I was screaming and crying in pain. After some time, others [police men] intervened and refrained the two. Then I was taken to the duty officer's room," Nazmul added.

"As I fell sick, they took me to Anderkillah General Hospital around 2:00pm. They took me to Bakalia Police Station after initial treatment there," Nazmul said.

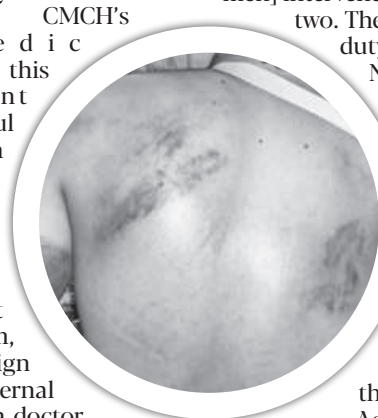
According to Nazmul, he was taken to CMCH around 10:30pm as his condition deteriorated.

Nazmul's brother Nazrul Islam said he first came to know about Nazmul's whereabouts on July 19 when a nurse of the Anderkillah hospital called him.

"Before that, we couldn't trace Nazmul. I called him on Thursday and asked him to come to my residence amid the ongoing unrest," he added.

Kotwali Police Station's OC Obadul denied the allegation of torture. He said Nazmul sustained injuries during clash.

Bakalia Police Station OC Aftab Hossain echoed the same.



‘Why did they target his eyes?’

Asks mother of Imran who suffered pellet injuries during clash; DMCH, Ophthalmology Institute filled with patients with similar eye wounds

AHMED DEEPTO

Eighteen-year old Md Imran joined the quota reform protest in Uttara on Thursday when police fired shotgun pellets, teargas shells and sound grenades to disperse protesters.

Several pellets pierced through different parts of his body, including his eyes and head.

Now, he is fighting for his life at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, as his mother keeps weeping beside him.

Even after surgery, he has lost vision in one of his eyes, while doctors are waiting for him to get stable before surgically removing the pellets stuck inside his head.

"My only son is barely alive. I have watched as he lost vision in one of his eyes. The condition of his other eye is not good either. Meanwhile, there are pellets still stuck in his head," said his mother Parvin Begum.

"Why did they shoot my boy? Why did they target his head and eyes? What was his fault? Was participating in a just movement his fault?" Parvin said, with a



PHOTO: DIPAN NANDY

Day Labourer Mujibur Rahman, 35, suffered pellet injuries to his left eye during a clash between law enforcers and protesters in Bangshal on Friday. He is now receiving treatment at DMCH.

mixture of rage, despair and disbelief in her voice.

"Even if he recovers, he won't see with an eye again. His life will never be the same," she said.

Imran is not alone.

DMCH sources said at least 118 persons have received treatment with eye injuries, mostly from pellet wounds, in the last four days since the violence escalated.

At least 67 such patients are still undergoing treatment at DMCH's Ophthalmology Department.

Two doctors of the department said over 50 persons have either lost their vision in both eyes or one.

A similar situation persists in National Institute of Ophthalmology and Hospital.

Till yesterday, the institute had conducted surgeries on at least 227 patients who came to the facility with eye injuries, mostly sustained from shotgun pellets.

Golam Mostafa, director of the facility, said most of the injured might lose vision completely.

Step down and give people relief

FROM PAGE 3

"The government is making evil efforts to shift its fault onto others. Stop all these foul plays and create a proper academic atmosphere immediately by accepting the just demands of students," he said.

The BNP leader also called upon the country's people to support the justified movement of the students.

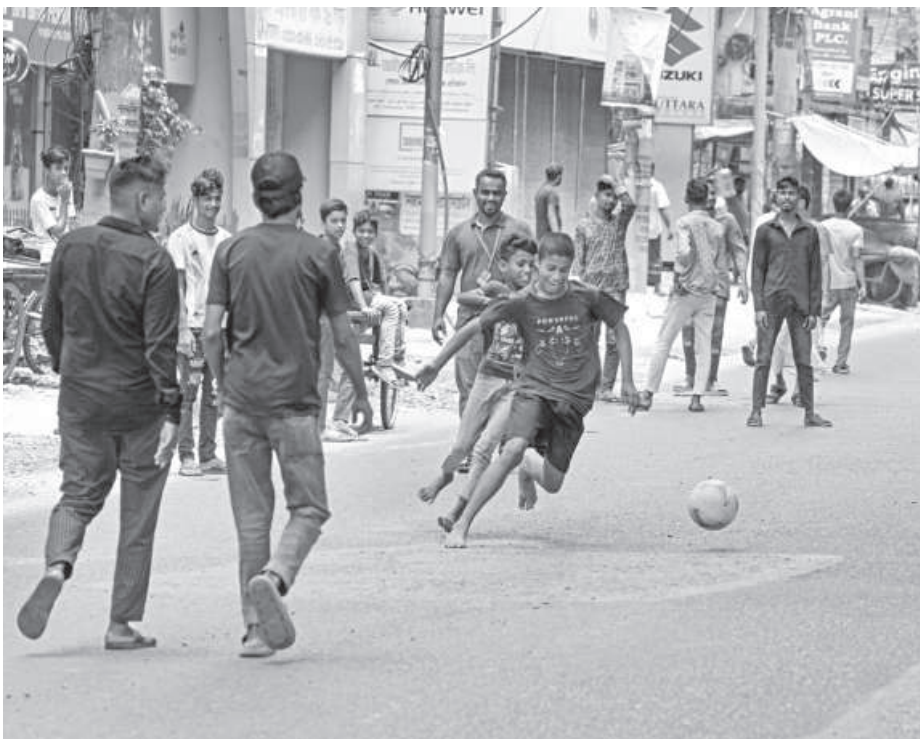
"Had the government resolved this problem through the court at the beginning, so many innocent students wouldn't have been killed and the bloodletting situation wouldn't have been created," he said regarding the apex court verdict on quota system.

He also said Awami League General Secretary Obaidur Quader urged the ruling party activists to resist the student movement and the prime minister made derogatory comments against the students, contributing to creating the dreadful situation all across the country.

The BNP leader also said the government has stopped communication with the entire world by shutting down the internet.

This situation has led to a colossal loss for the country's economy, said Fakhrul.

He also urged all to support the students' just movement.



Two boys playing football on an empty road on the second day of the ongoing curfew yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

A relatively calm Dhaka

FROM PAGE 3

"Defying the curfew, I had to search for DPDC and gas offices for more than two hours and now I'm waiting to pay the bills. I was afraid of being fined or arrested... but I had no other alternatives," he added.

Like the previous day, many could not recharge their phones as well.

On the second day, military men, mounted on trucks and armoured personnel carriers (APCs), were patrolling Dhaka roads. They also stood

guard in front of important government buildings.

They frequently stopped pedestrians and vehicles to question them regarding movement during curfew.

In front of Bijay Sarani, police and army stopped several vehicles and motorcycles and asked them to return home.

A police officer on duty, said, "Many people don't know about what they can do and what they cannot do during a curfew. So, when we stop them, we brief them about it and warn them of the consequences."

It's a victory

FROM PAGE 3

met in the verdict," he said, adding, "Seeds of discrimination are still there. The verdict does not reflect the movement to eradicate discrimination."

The government's political stance was to keep freedom fighters quota, so it was a victory for the government, not students.

GM Quader said he will come up with formal reaction after going through the copy of the full verdict.

The Supreme Court yesterday ordered a major reformation in the quota system in the jobs of government, semi-government and autonomous organisations, curtailing quotas to seven percent from the 56 percent.

The apex court, which scrapped a High Court judgement that reinstated quotas in government jobs, said 93 percent of the jobs are to be given based on merit.

It also fixed five percent quota for the children of freedom fighters, martyred freedom fighters, and Biranganas, one percent for ethnic minorities and one percent for physically challenged and third-gender candidates in the services.

PRAYER TIMING					
JULY 22					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4-15	12-45	5-00	6-54	8-15	
JAMAAT 4-50	1-15	5-15	6-58	8-45	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

INTERNET SHUTDOWN

Small entrepreneurs in big trouble

NILIMA JAHAN

The nationwide shutdown of internet services has had far reaching impacts, affecting a variety of groups.

Take the example of Israt Jahan Banani, a homemade dry food and pickle seller from Dohar, who owns the Facebook page "Fusion Food".

Her business has already been closed for four days. According to Banani, if this continues for a few more days, then she will likely incur a loss of Tk 60,000.

"Besides, I had a stock of halwa worth Tk 17,000, which has now gone rotten," she shared.

Such is the case for many small entrepreneurs operating small businesses through Facebook and other apps. For many of them, this is the sole source of income in their households and is currently closed due to the internet outage.

Noorjahan Kabir, owner of Pure Promise by Noor, an organic oil shop based on Facebook, said she usually purchases her stock on credit from suppliers and pays them after selling the products.

"Over the last seven days, delivery agents were not being able to deliver my products due to the protest. I don't know how I will manage... My supplier is also demanding their dues, but my

hands are totally empty. Besides, I was also supposed to get payment from a delivery company I work with. However, they failed to pay me as internet banking is not working," Noorjahan Kabir said.

Mirpur resident Moriom Sultana Chadni, owner of Chadni's Cake and Fastfood Shop, said she runs the page alongside her husband, which is the sole source of their household income.

"We could not deliver the orders we received and prepared, while the ingredients also got rotten in the past four days," Moriom Sultana told this correspondent yesterday.

Uttara resident Asma Akter Kanta, owner of Dhobol on Facebook, said, "This shutdown means I will incur a loss. Meanwhile, I have to pay my 10 female staffers, who are solely dependent on my business."

Nasima Akter Nisha, general secretary of E-CAB, said these Facebook based small

entrepreneurs live on their daily sales.

"I have talked to many of them in the past few days and I am very sad hearing their current situations. If everything is not fixed soon, they will face difficulties," she told The Daily Star.

"We urge the government to give a speedy solution to this ongoing crisis," she added.

This shutdown means I will incur a loss. Meanwhile, I have to pay my 10 female staff, who are solely dependent on my business.

ASMA AKTER KANTA
Owner of Dhobol on Facebook

We urge the government to give a speedy solution to this ongoing crisis.

NASIMA AKTER NISHA
General Secretary of E-CAB



Sohel Rana



Ramendu Majumdar



Nasir Uddin Yousuff



Raisul Islam Asad



Abul Hayat

‘A huge triumph for our students’

Cultural personalities discuss Supreme Court verdict

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Much to the triumph of quota-reform activists, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday overturned the High Court verdict that reinstated the quota system in government jobs. As many had lost their lives in violent clashes that upended the entire nation, cultural personalities welcomed the verdict that looks to re-establish peace across the country. The Daily Star reached out to some of the seniormost cultural figures in Bangladesh yesterday.

Sohel Rana

This is a historic verdict, and a huge triumph for the students. I feel like this is a big win for them, as they have gotten what they had wanted since the beginning of this movement. I did think that they would keep the freedom fighter quota at 10 percent, but 5 percent is not entirely illogical. I also welcome the fact that they did not keep quota for women, since I feel that women today are no less than men in talent and capability. I hope that the government also pays attention to their 8-point demand, as I wholeheartedly support the petition to compensate the victims’ families and provide a government job to at least one in their immediate family. For now, I urge the students to go back to class.

Ramendu Majumdar

I am happy with this verdict – I believe



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

that now, talent will take centre-stage at determining who gets more opportunities. I feel like at this point, the students should postpone their movement, and discuss their further concerns with the government bilaterally. I am very disturbed by how many

lives were lost due to these violent clashes, who will take the blame for this? I urge the government to investigate the matter and sentence those responsible. Although I support this verdict, I do feel like omitting the quota for women is a misstep.

Nasir Uddin Yousuff

I accept this verdict wholeheartedly, as it means that all the lives lost due to these violent clashes are not for nothing. However, I am very disappointed that the quota for women was omitted. Those who chanted slogans on

the roads yesterday (July 21) that there is no need for female quotas, are blissfully unaware of the scenario in rural areas. Women need to be given an opportunity to prosper, as they have to regularly fight against sexist biases – at least 5 percent quotas should have been reserved for them.

Raisul Islam Asad

It must be noted that the children of freedom fighters were highly deprived from proper educational facilities after our liberation war. We also know that after the assassination of Bangabandhu till ’96, a certain group tried to erase the actual history of our liberation war, so children of freedom fighters suffered a lot. This is why I believe that the heirs of freedom fighters should receive some form of quota, which the verdict did keep – so I welcome it. I do have a question – why did these students, along with their other demands, not ask for the punishment of whomever caused the destruction of national property? I must say that the ones who participated in destructive activities are enemies of the country.

Abul Hayat

Logical demands have won, and I am sure that along with me, the entire country supports this verdict. Also, freedom fighters were in no way disrespected, as they will still have 5 percent reserved for their families. I wish that the students’ demands were fulfilled much earlier, we could have avoided so much unnecessary bloodshed!



MEET YOUR MENTORS

70+ years of combined experience



A B M JABED SULTAN





MUHAMMAD SANJID HOSSAIN





MUNAF MOJIB CHOWDHURY





MD. EHSANUL HOQUE





JOSHUA ADHIKARI



DIGITAL MARKETING ESSENTIALS



Visit www.keeron.com
and embark on your journey to become career-ready.

At least 7 killed on 2nd day of curfew

UN human rights chief, EU, UK voice concern

Normalcy to return in a short time

Israel strikes Gaza

Shutdown

Users suffer amid internet outage

US issues travel alert for its citizens

150 arrested

8 trade bodies

They expressed condolences for those families who lost their loved ones in the violence and wished prompt recovery of the injured.

Star BUSINESS

Transport operators sitting idle, counting losses

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The violence centring the quota reform protests and associated curfew are preventing trucks and covered vans from plying the roads and highways, leading to losses for their operators alongside businesses dependent on them.

“We have been totally shut for the last three days,” lamented Moqbul Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Covered Van, Truck Panya Paribahan Mailik Samity, an association of transporters.

Ahmed said they mainly transport exports and imports to and from the Chattogram port, which handles around 90 percent of the country’s trade.

Given the present situation, garment factory owners are reluctant to dispatch exports fearing attacks on the roads, he said.

At the same time, goods are not being loaded from the Chattogram port due to an internet blackout since July 18, which has impacted the assessment and clearance of imported goods, he said.

There are around 15.5 lakh trucks and covered vans registered with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority. Of them, around 3.5 lakh ply the roads and highways on any given day.

The Dhaka-Chattogram highway alone sees roughly 2,000 covered vans daily, Ahmed estimated.



Flatbed trucks used for carrying containers remain parked along the road in Chowchala area in Chattogram city yesterday. For a fourth day straight, the delivery of imports from the country’s premier port remained suspended due to violence centring the quota reform movement, a nationwide curfew and the internet blackout. The photo was taken around 11:00am.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



However, he was hopeful that they would be able to operate normally after the curfew was lifted.

Khandker Anayet Ullah, secretary general of Bangladesh Road Transport Owner’s Association, said owners do not want to risk damage to their vehicles despite incurring huge losses.

As the vehicles have been lying idle for the last couple of days, overall losses of the truckers would amount to at least Tk 175 crore per day if Tk 5,000 is considered as the minimum loss, according to Anayet.

Some vehicles, transporting perishables such as fresh vegetables and fruits, are plying the roads but operators are demanding higher fares as risk premium, he said.

“The fare to transport vegetables has increased by around Tk 10,000 per truck due to the threat of attacks,” said Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Sujon, general secretary of Karwan Bazar Wholesale Owner Association.

He informed that it costs around Tk 15,000 to Tk 16,000 to rent a truck to carry vegetables in a normal situation. But it has shot up to Tk 26,000 to Tk 27,000 per truck amid the ongoing curfew and violence.

In the case of mangoes, the fare has gone up to Tk 32,000 per truck from Tk 22,000, fruit and vegetable traders said.

Anayet added that the price of transport services tends to increase when the situation is risky and sometimes trucks are always needed to transport essential goods.

However, RN Paul, managing director of Pran-RFL Group, said big companies were largely unaffected by the price hike.

“As we can meet 80 percent of our needs through our own transport, our costs have not increased. Logistics suppliers meet the remaining 20 percent but corporate clients, who have long term contracts, are not being charged higher fares,” he said.

Informal workers struggling to make ends meet

SUKANTA HALDER and MD ABU TALHA SARKER

“I can’t get you to understand how I managed to pay for meals over the past four days,” a dejected labourer, Muzahid Hossain, said yesterday.

His livelihood involves engaging in manual work for which he gets paid at the end of the day. So, if work is not available even for a single day, there is practically no way to make up for it when trying to make ends meet.

Talking to The Daily Star in front of Mukto Bangla Shopping Complex in Mirpur-1, he said he has been arriving there very early in the morning as usual but no one was there to hire labourers over the past four days.

His financial situation has been in dire straits as he had to borrow Tk 2,000 from a neighbour with interest just to get by.

Day labourers in Dhaka are among those who are suffering the most due to the ongoing unrest along with the curfew imposed by the government to stem the violence.

Although wage growth in Bangladesh has been slowly climbing since July 2021, it has remained below the inflation rate for the past two and a half years.

Wages of low-paid and unskilled workers grew 7.95 percent in June, which was 1.77 percentage points below the inflation rate of 9.72 percent in the same month, showed the wage index of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

This trend has been continuing for the past 29 months, as per BBS data.

The annual average price spike in Bangladesh surged to its highest level in 12 years in the just concluded fiscal year despite easing in June, reflecting the persistent erosion of real income

LEFT IN THE LURCH

- Income of day labourers has fallen drastically
- Number of rickshaw passengers has come down
- Many day labourers are using their savings to make ends meet
- Many workers are borrowing money at high interest

and the deterioration of the living standards of the lower-income groups.

This is forcing low-income and unskilled workers to cut consumption amid falling real incomes.

The ongoing unrest has added to their woes. Anis Bhuiyan, a rickshaw puller residing with his four-member family in Muslim Bazar area of Mirpur, said he can usually keep Tk 800 to Tk 1,000 for himself after paying the Tk 350 daily rent to the vehicle owner.

Now he was hardly able to earn even half, reasoning that he was unable to go long distances using the main roads.

“Schools and colleges remain shut. General people don’t come out except for urgent needs. As a result, rickshaw pullers like me are not getting a sufficient number of passengers, which has reduced earnings,” he said.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA).

Nazmul Haque, executive director of Saif Powertec, which operates two terminals of the port, said the scarcity of space at the port yards had severely hindered operations.

“About 40 percent of the space needs to be free to ensure smooth operations. The internet blackout has made our jobs tougher because we don’t have the scope to see the yard on the monitors now. So, staff of berth operators are trying to physically detect free spaces and accommodate containers,” he said.

If the situation does not improve over the next couple of days, it will be difficult to maintain operational activities, he added.

Mohammad Saidul Islam, deputy commissioner of Custom House, Chattogram added that assessment of almost all import and export consignments was halted since the internet blackout prevented them from calculating duties, collecting revenue, and logging data entries of examinations.

“We are permitting the release of some imported perishable goods, essential commodities and fuel oil upon receiving an undertaking from importers.

“Similarly, a portion of export consignments that had previously completed the assessment process are being allowed to be shipped,” he added.

Port officials said four vessels were scheduled to leave the port jetties yesterday. However, as containers could not be sent to the port on time, two

vessels had to extend their stay while the remaining two departed with sparse cargo on board.

Singapore-bound vessel MV Sinarsaba was supposed to receive 380 TEUs of export containers but had to extend its stay after failing to receive even a single container from ICDs.

Similarly, Colombo-bound HR Shahare was booked to ship 250 TEUs of export containers but had to extend its stay by a day as no containers reached the port till the early hours of yesterday.

Kamrul Islam Mazumder, chief operating officer of Ispahani Summit Alliance Terminal at Kattoli, said they planned to send 132 TEUs of export containers to these two vessels by Saturday night but failed to do so because of a disruption in transportation.

Likewise, KDS Logistics failed to send 90 TEUs to the ships as drivers of container-carrying vehicles were unwilling to operate, said a senior official of the ICD. Additionally, two vessels namely Maersk Port Klang and Anderson Dragon, sailed from the port yesterday with only a fraction of the containers they were booked to carry.

Maersk Port Klang sailed with only 120 TEUs of empty containers against a booking of 1,000 TEUs of empty containers while Anderson Dragon left with 178 TEUs against a booking of 230 TEUs.

The transport of export containers from the 21 ICDs to the port also dropped

significantly as very few trucks and covered vans loaded with export cargo arrived at the ICDs over the past four days, said Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association.

Export activities at ICDs dropped by 80 to 85 percent due to the unavailability of export cargo from factories, he added.

Syed M Tanvir, managing director of leading denim exporter Pacific Jeans, said losses would be disastrous, adding that it may take two months to recover.

Mentioning that the country’s export figure has declined in the last two years, he said such a blow to exports at the very beginning of the fiscal year would definitely have a negative impact on annual export figures.

“We hope the government can bring stability as soon as possible. If possible, normalcy should come back within tomorrow since Monday is very crucial for us as it is the first working day following the weekend in countries where our buyers are from.

“If we cannot resume production or communicate with the buyers by Monday, it will be a very wrong message to them.”

Khairul Alam Suzan, vice-president of the Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association, told The Daily Star that this crisis had damaged the country in two ways.

Firstly, it presented Bangladesh in a bad light in the global arena and secondly the economy was dealt a big blow as almost all activities have been paused due to the internet blackout.

Let factories run, restore internet Demand garment exporters

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Garment exporters yesterday demanded that the government keep the sector out of the purview of the ongoing curfew and fast restore internet services for the resumption of production as soon as possible.

Production and shipments are dependent on strict lead times set by international clothing retailers and brands, yet the factories have had to be kept shut for the past three days, they said.

The sector’s direct losses for the production suspension during this period amount to around \$48 million, according to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

The sector is facing the losses at a time when the country’s exports have been falling over the last three years.

Leaders of the garment and textile sectors held a meeting at a hotel in the capital’s Gulshan and afterwards placed their demands on meeting the principal secretary to the prime minister.

“If necessary, we will meet the prime minister with our demand,” said SM Mannan Kochi, the BGMEA president, after the meeting on the overall situation in the sector and way forward.

Former BGMEA presidents, leaders of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) and Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) were present.

BKMEA Executive President Mohammad Hatem said import and export

of goods remain suspended for the internet blackout, for which communicating with international retailers and brands was proving troublesome.

This has also left the factory managements unable to send inspection and status reports to retailers and brands, he said.

Moreover, many trucks could not take goods from the factories to the Chattogram port but it is not possible to inform buyers of this development, he added.

There are bigger indirect losses for delays such as buyers either cancelling work orders or shifting those to other countries or seeking discounts or air shipments, he said.

“Factories will remain shut tomorrow (Monday),” he said.

When international retailers and brands lose confidence in a garment manufacturer, it is a major loss for the sector, said Abdullah Hil Rakib, vice-president of the BGMEA.

There are a lot of uncertainties over the production and shipment of goods because of the unrest and curfew, he said.

Correction

In a story headlined “Garment sector’s losses piling up as factories remain shut” published yesterday, it was mentioned that the sector was losing over \$500 million a day due to the closure of factories. However, exporters yesterday said the sector’s direct losses in the last three days amounted to \$48 million.

A timely verdict

Court grants 93 percent quota for talent-based recruitment

We welcome the Appellate Division's decision on Sunday to guide quota reforms by reserving 93 percent of quota for merit-based recruitment in civil service, overturning the High Court verdict on retaining the quota system as it was before the 2018 annulment. The decision from a full bench of the court, sitting under extraordinary circumstances with a nationwide curfew in place, ends weeks of speculations in this regard. It also comes against a backdrop of unprecedented violence that really needed the highest court of the country to intervene judiciously, and we congratulate it for doing just that. While the legal implications of the judgement will be discussed in depth in the coming days, we feel certain issues need to be highlighted.

Beside the 93 percent quota for general candidates, the court stipulates 5 percent for children of freedom fighters and biranganas (women tortured and raped by Pakistani army during the 1971 Liberation War), one percent for ethnic minorities, and one for persons with disabilities and those belonging to third gender. While the court's provision of quotas may be amended by the government in future, if needed, we feel the ruling should be implemented soonest. We are told that a circular based on the judgement may be published as early as Tuesday. The law minister has clarified to the press that the government will follow the directives of the court in full. Without the official circular, it will not be clear as to how the government will implement those directives.

That said, the quota reform, as things stand, is but part of the demands forwarded by the protesting students to the government recently. Those remaining issues also need to be resolved quickly. Students are right to demand answers and accountability for what happened during the last few days of their movement. And without a proper response, their confidence in the sincerity of government efforts will not be restored. In its observation, the court stressed the importance of students returning to classrooms. Now that the legal hurdle has been cleared, students too should be motivated to ensure their swift return—and the country's—to normalcy.

Finally, what happened over the last few days, with the death toll from violent clashes reaching 127 as confirmed by this paper as of Saturday, has left a deep mark in the minds of the public, not just the students. The wounds that have been afflicted would need healing and resolving, too. Once the dust is settled and quieter times return, we will need to start reflecting on those unresolved issues and grievances that found a potent expression under the shadow of the quota movement, effectively plunging the whole country into an unbelievable crisis.

Nation under curfew

Sufferings of mass people are becoming dire

As the nationwide curfew continued onto its second day, the immense socioeconomic cost it caused the ordinary citizens, businesses, and the nation in general, is deeply concerning. Some of the damage could have been mitigated had the government not shut down the nationwide internet service for such a prolonged period. Businesses, for example, could have continued their operations online and with their foreign counterparts; citizens could have availed medical services or purchased essentials online. Media outlets have not been able to publish news through their online platforms since Thursday night. And the uncertainty that comes from not receiving timely information on what's happening across the country—and from being cut off from the rest of the world—imposes its own psychological toll.

While we acknowledge the necessity of a curfew to prevent violence, the harm being done to the economy as a result cannot be emphasised enough. According to a report in this daily, consumers are suffering immensely as prices of essentials—which were already skyrocketing, with inflation hitting a record 12-year high earlier—have shot through the roof. With the transportation of perishable commodities to the capital remaining scarce, and supply chains being disrupted across the country, traders are hiking prices of nearly all goods. And yet, some consumers are still having to return home empty-handed, with markets and stores closing early having run out of supplies. The impact of all these on the poor and low-income groups will be devastating. Even before tensions escalated across the country, the ongoing economic crisis was creating scores of new poor and forcing many to cut back on their meals and nutritional intake. What will happen to them now, we simply shudder to ask.

Meanwhile, emergency services across the country, including at hospitals, have collapsed, as many services that are dependent on the internet have become non-functional, and the number of injured patients flooding in remain high.

Reportedly, at least 24 people were killed on Saturday and hundreds more were injured in clashes with security forces, whose use of excessive force we strongly condemn. For how long can such violence and curfews continue? And who will answer for the massive damage all these are doing to the nation? The government needs to be more aware of the ground realities and sufferings that the general public are having to endure, and pursue a path of de-escalation. It needs to answer for the use of excessive force against citizens by security forces, investigate all such incidents, and ensure they are not repeated. Moreover, it needs to urgently restore the internet service so that people can avail some essential services online, and look for a way to withdraw the curfew without further violence breaking out, so that some semblance of normalcy can return to the lives of ordinary people.

Did we have to pay such a heavy price for this verdict?



THE SOUND & THE FURY

Sushmita S Preetha
is the op-ed editor at The Daily Star.

SUSHMITA S PREETHA

The verdict is in. The Appellate Division through its observations has recommended that quotas be restricted to seven percent: five percent for freedom fighters' descendants, one percent for ethnic minorities, and one percent for people with disabilities.

For all practical purposes, it is a win for the protesters. Or so it would have been, had the morgues not been brimming with dead bodies, hospitals inundated with those critically injured, and public establishments set on fire around the country. Everyone is anxious, afraid, angry, and agitated—a state of despair exacerbated manifold by the internet blackout imposed by the government to control the free flow of information. How many will be picked up, how many tortured, how many killed, how many maimed for life before all this is over?

Each new day has brought with it ever-more shocking revelations of the cruelty of state apparatuses. The events of Tuesday (when BCL cadres viciously attacked protesters) and Wednesday (when law enforcement agencies stormed the public universities to drive off students from the campuses) already seem like distant memories. And talk as we must about the brutality in the days since, it's worth revisiting why law enforcers would have the right or the audacity to march into campuses of autonomous institutions, firing shotguns and sound grenades aimed at students in their late teens and early 20s. What does it say about our university authorities, VCs and provosts, except what we have known all along—that they are mere puppets to the whims of the ruling party? What mockery they have all made of the sanctity of the university campus(es), whose walls are witness to some of the biggest uprisings against injustice in our history! If the students are now asking for the resignation of the VCs and provosts, it is the least they can demand for being betrayed time and time again.

Then came Thursday, which brought with it state-sponsored violence, the scale of which none of us were prepared for, despite living through the brutal squashing of the road safety movement in 2018 and every dissenting movement since. Areas in Dhaka turned into zones



What law and whose order can justify the use of lethal weapons to disperse protesters, some not even old enough to vote?

FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

think—that they could shoot the young students into submission after their trusted helmet *bahini* had failed to get the job done? That they could dangle the carrot of dialogue and concession, all the while opening fire upon the students, including those from private universities who had taken to the streets simply to express solidarity with their public university counterparts? The movement might have started on the issue of the reform of quota system, but underneath simmered discontent accumulated over the years about the culture of repression, conduct of law enforcement and actions of the ruling party's student wing. The outpouring on the streets over the past week is the manifestation of a long and deeply felt sense of injustice that has only been fanned by virulent rhetoric and violent tactics of the powers that be. By resorting to its tried-and-tested

that should the government want, it could simply issue a new circular? Why did government high-ups vilify the protesters and resort to their age-old strategy of "othering" to justify unlawful attacks by the student wing? Why did it unleash the BCL on protesting students, and then, when the protesters fought back and drove them out of the campuses, close down all educational institutions and halls? And most infuriatingly, why

student movement, was picked up by "plainclothes persons" in the early morning yesterday, allegedly because he refused to agree with the government's proposal for a dialogue ahead of the Supreme Court's hearing. Nahid has since been found by his family and taken to the hospital to tend to injuries allegedly inflicted during the hours he was "missing." After the quota reform and road safety movements of 2018,

The verdict may be in, but the bloodshed cannot be so easily erased from public memory. At the very least, the government should declare a general amnesty for student protesters as a gesture of goodwill. It should restore internet connection, which will bring some semblance of normalcy back to the country and help assuage people's anxieties and dispel the rumours going around.



The violence unleashed on students over the past week cannot be so easily erased from public memory.

FILE PHOTO: KHALID NAZRUL

of unimaginable violence, with law enforcers charging upon and firing on students armed at most with sticks and brickbats, without provocation in most cases. The clips shared by countless students on social media, followed by eye witness reports in the media, provide chilling accounts of the atrocities conducted by the police and BGB in the name of maintaining law and order. What law and whose order can justify the use of lethal weapons to disperse protesters, some not even old enough to vote? At least 25 people were killed, 11 of them students, including a 17-year-old, and over 3,000 were injured—that we know of. Predictably, the government's heavy-handedness only served to amplify the anger of the masses, and we began to see protesters—or motivated elements infiltrating the movement—turn to increasingly destructive measures to resist.

What did the government really

strategy, the government once again proved that it is too arrogant to listen to citizens' legitimate and peaceful demands for policy reforms. And in the process, it has done itself the biggest disservice.

Now, the country is in the throes of chaos. From toll booths to offices of Bangladesh Road and Transport Authority (BTRA) offices, from flyovers to metro rail stations, numerous public establishments have been set ablaze or vandalised over the past few days. As per a report in this daily, miscreants wreaked havoc inside the Mirpur 10 and Kazipara metro rail stations, smashing vending machines, ticket counters, close circuit cameras and everything else on sight. We condemn such mindless destruction in no uncertain terms. And while the government can blame third party political elements all it wants now for the anarchy that we have witnessed over the past few

did it pour fuel in the fire by shooting young students and civilians? Why did it fail so miserably at containing the situation without resorting to lethal means? Why did it serve chaos on a platter for the so-called *durbrittokaris* to take advantage of?

The death toll has continued to rise, with at least 66 killed on Friday alone—that we could confirm—and at least 21 on Saturday, even amid a curfew. In only four days, the death toll has crossed 127, as per data collected directly from the hospitals as of Saturday (the real count could be much higher), and includes law enforcers, journalists, pedestrians, rickshaw pullers and even children. It is truly inconceivable that so many lives have needlessly been lost, simply because the government was too obstinate to "give in" to the students' demands. And that political elements are now trying to create anarchy using the momentum of the movement will only endanger further the lives of

we saw how students were tracked down, detained, arrested, surveilled upon and threatened, and their lives irrevocably altered, with the state showing no mercy for those who had dared challenge it.

The verdict may be in, but the bloodshed cannot be so easily erased from public memory. At the very least, the government should declare a general amnesty for student protesters as a gesture of goodwill. It should restore internet connection, which will bring some semblance of normalcy back to the country and help assuage people's anxieties and dispel the rumours going around. If the government is capable of learning any lesson at all, it should be that it can no longer afford to be so arrogant, so impervious to people's simmering frustrations and so ruthless in their handling of mass movements. After all, there is nothing more dangerous than a people who have nothing left to lose.



The outpouring on the streets over the past week is the manifestation of a long and deeply felt sense of injustice. This photo was taken in Sylhet on July 18, 2024.

FILE PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Bring those who ordered the excessive use of force to account



Barrister Sara Hossain
is a Supreme Court lawyer and the honorary executive director of
Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

SARA HOSSAIN

The student protesters’ demand for the reform of the existing quota system in government job recruitment is logical, in my opinion. Quota is a temporary special arrangement, which can be enforced in hopes of achieving equality. Our constitution says the same; the preamble mentions creating equal opportunities.

In the preamble as well as Article 8, it is stated that the goal of our state is to create a just economic and social system. In articles 28 and 29, there is a mandate for the state that allows it to take special initiatives in this regard. Article 28 (4) says that for the advancement of women, children and the backward sections of society, the state can take special initiatives. And Article 29 (3) says that for any appointments in the service of the republic or a republic office, there can be reservations for the backward sections. So there is a constitutional mandate that quotas can be created to achieve equality.

Now the question is, how will the quota be used, and for whom? The quota reform seekers have raised this concern: through

I think quotas should be determined because we need quotas in order to ensure progress towards equality for those who are historically disadvantaged in our society. And that includes certain communities including Indigenous people, people with disabilities, etc—people who have been held back because of their cast, ethnicity or other characteristics.

which process the quota system is being implemented, and whom it is serving. Are the existing quotas helping us achieve equality, as per the constitutional mandate, or are they the doing the opposite, creating a situation where some groups are getting advantages over others, further creating discrimination? This is why the protesters have labelled themselves as the Students’ Movement against Discrimination.

In the verdict we received from the Appellate Division today (yesterday), the



What we have seen in terms of the excessive use of force against peaceful protesters is unconscionable.

FILE PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

court suggested five percent quota for freedom fighters, one percent for differently abled population and the third gender, and one percent for the Indigenous people. The women’s quota was not mentioned. I see today’s verdict as a suggestion, because how the quotas will be determined is entirely to be decided by the executive branch, as only it has the power to do so according to the constitution. The court also observed that the government can change or reform the quota system as it deems necessary. The court also mentioned a circular to be issued in this

should be based on evidence. There’s already a lot of decisions from our courts and from other courts in the region and indeed elsewhere, that when you make quotas, they can’t create further discrimination as a result. These principles have to be borne in mind when the quotas are determined. I think it’s important that all these issues should be taken into account when the government does make a decision regarding quotas, that they should be aimed at serving equality for those who are disadvantaged. And this has to

system is fair and representative, and that it doesn’t unfairly advantage any particular group. They want the quotas to not be imposed in a way that the majority of the aspirants for positions in government offices are blocked out from that opportunity.

What we have seen in the past week in terms of the excessive use of force against peaceful protesters, I think that is unconscionable. We are hearing reports even today that there are firings going on. It is essential that this violence stops. It is critical that there should

directly on the protesters and others, but also those who ordered the firing to be brought to account. The last two days we had a curfew, and we have been told that there is a shoot-at-sight order. What was the order in place before the curfew was imposed? Under whose authority did those shootings happen that led to more than a 100 deaths, as far as we know, or maybe more? How did this take place and how do we hold these people to account? I think this is the most urging question before us now.

An independent Bangladesh is enough for me



Tamanna Khan
is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star.

TAMANNA KHAN

I am a grandchild of a freedom fighter. My Nana did not fight the Pakistan Army in the battlefield, but as a railway official in 1971, he used train coaches to transport arms and ammunition to freedom fighters. When the Pakistani authorities learnt of his actions, Nana had to spend months as a fugitive, which took a toll on him both mentally and physically. His contribution was recognised by the Bangladesh government. He got promoted after the war, and also received a plot in Dhaka. Though he did not live long enough to build a house there and reside in it, his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are reaping the benefits of that reward: a place to call our nanabari/dadabari. But, in my opinion, the biggest reward that my cousins and I and our children received, thanks to my Nana and thousand others like him, was Bangladesh—a independent nation, where, I believe, we enjoy much more privilege than our parents did growing up in East Pakistan.

Bangladesh was under Pakistani rule for more than two decades. I don’t know how much change my parents witnessed during that time, but in my lifetime, in independent Bangladesh, two decades meant a huge transformation. I will give a tiny example. My earliest memory of travelling to our village in the Narsingdi district in the 80s was crossing a river on a ferry and parking our car at the house of a local influential politician. We had to walk the rest of way to my dadabari on an earthen road. By 2000, there was no need for a ferry to cross the river anymore, and our car could drive right up to the gate of our village home. The serene landscape of green rice fields one could see after crossing the Shitalakkhya Bridge all the way to our village also disappeared gradually, being replaced by numerous factories and mills.



VISUAL: MANAN MORSEHD

In the 80s, poor young men and women from our village would come to Dhaka looking for employment opportunities often as domestic help or for other low-skilled jobs. That changed at the turn of the century, so much so that it became difficult to find even agriculture labourers in our village anymore. That happened largely because of the factories that grew on the outskirts of Dhaka.

Some may argue that the change Bangladesh experienced can also be attributed

my cousins attain good education and subsequently get jobs, which may not pay enough to buy a goat worth Tk 15 lakh, but help us get by and put food on our plates at least three times a day. None of us hold a government job. Whether we were talented enough to even try for a government job is a different question. Most of us never actually took the BCS exams or the recruitment tests in Bangladesh Railway. I don’t think getting a government job was ever our dream—not

While I never had to use any preferential treatment as a freedom fighter’s grandchild, today I feel if I had to, I would have felt ashamed to use it especially after so many deaths surrounding this issue. Like I said, my Nana’s contribution to the Liberation War has given me a country to call home. A 45-year-old like me in Palestine does not have that privilege. How well I use this gift depends on my own capability. For my descendants, the last thing I want is preferential treatment for their ancestors’ legacy.

mine, at least. Growing up in the 80s and 90s, we were attracted to private jobs because the remuneration was way better than any government job. The only government job that sounded “cool” was that in foreign service and our relatives who worked in that government wing scored the highest marks in their public examinations throughout. Mind you that was a different era and only one or two persons could stand first in the public examinations among thousands of students in the entire country. So foreign service remained an unattainable dream, which was not even worth trying for.

One reason why my cousins and I were able to live a more or less privileged life in independent Bangladesh is our parents’ hard work. They, too, had an advantage over others. They were educated, and were able to cultivate that privilege so they never needed to rely on any quota system to get jobs. In fact, three of my four uncles worked in the private sector, and my eldest uncle who worked in a government bank had secured the job before 1971. It can be argued that, unlike my uncles, descendants of many freedom fighters might never have had the privilege of a good education to start with. Mere recognition would not have helped improve their situation. Whatever little the state offered them to make their situation better right after liberation was much-needed. In fact, the state could have done more. The political instability the country went through in the mid-70s and 80s denied many freedom fighters and their heirs their rights to access those state benefits. But did things not change in the 90s? Were the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters not able to use the preferential system in the 90s when the Awami League was in power? That should have helped many, who were deprived before, to

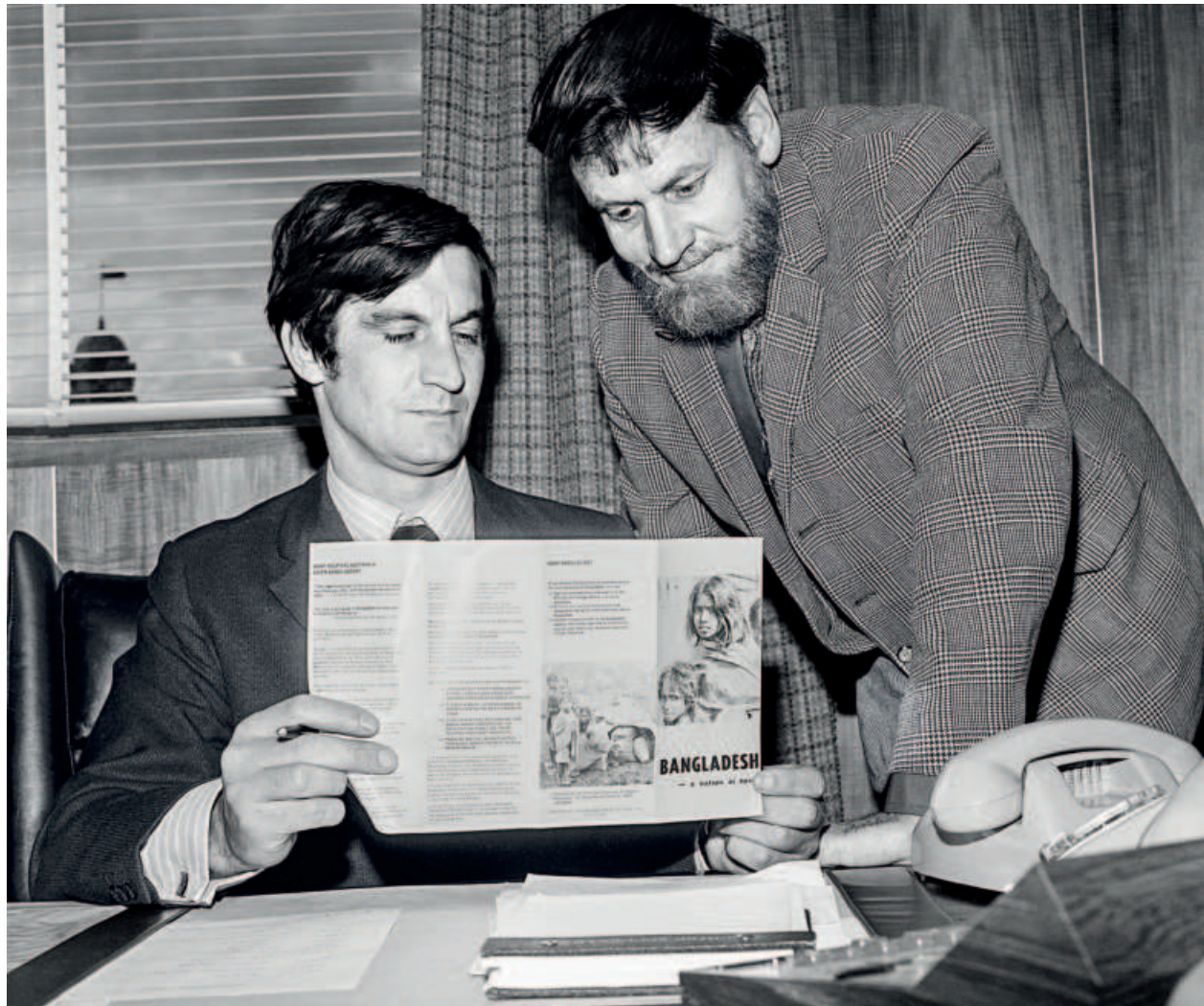
change their fate by securing government jobs.

The point I am trying to make is, people have had five decades in independent Bangladesh to make their lives better. During that time, at least two generations must have grown into adulthood, and despite all the corruption and crimes in the country, their lives must have been impacted to some positive extent by the country’s economic development. If that did not happen, then it is a total governance failure. It is the failure of all the governments Bangladesh has had that the country’s progress only touched a privileged few, created opportunities only for a handful, so much so that many want to rely on preferential treatment rather than on their own merit to attain some kind of job stability in their lives. It is also a failure of our policymakers and industrialists that they could not create enough employment opportunities in the private sector in 53 years so that young people, like their Western counterparts, would aspire for jobs in private enterprises or want to be entrepreneurs themselves.

While I never had to use any preferential treatment as a freedom fighter’s grandchild, today I feel if I had to, I would have felt ashamed to use it especially after so many deaths surrounding this issue. Like I said, my Nana’s contribution to the Liberation War has given me a country to call home. A 45-year-old like me in Palestine does not have that privilege. How well I use this gift depends on my own capability. For my descendants, the last thing I want is preferential treatment for their ancestors’ legacy. They should undoubtedly be proud of and thankful for their ancestors’ achievement, but also should have the dignity to make their own names on their own merit.



(L) A mother and her young daughter placing money in a collection tin in Sydney. (R) Two workers at the Freedom from Hunger Campaign office deliberating on how best to solicit public donations from a brochure.



Australian involvement in the Bangladesh Liberation War

Within the space of 10 months, Australian government policy moved from declared neutrality to supporting openly Bangladeshi independence, even if that meant attracting retaliation from Pakistan and the ire of America.

RACHEL STEVENS

If you think about the international reaction to the Bangladesh Liberation War, you most likely would consider the United States government openly siding with Pakistan. The People's Republic of China, Sri Lanka, and the Arab world also aligned that country. Many western nations – such as the United Kingdom – remained neutral in what they considered a civil conflict rather than a war of secession. Apart from India and the USSR, it seemed that the Bangladesh liberation movement had few allies. My recently published book, *Citizen-Driven Humanitarianism and the Bangladesh Liberation War: Australian Aid during the 1971 Refugee Crisis*, presents a different picture. In this book I show that when we look beyond the official stance of the Australian government and consider the perspectives of ordinary citizens, we find a populace deeply affected by Bangladeshis' struggle for freedom.



Moira Dynon outside her home counting cans of donated condensed milk before dispatch to India.

the early days of the war, repeating the claim by the Press Trust of India that the Pakistani military had killed more than 10,000 people, including civilians, in just two days. By reporting the war in such terms, Australian journalists laid the groundwork for Australian citizens to understand the conflict through the frame of Pakistani suppression of Bangladeshi demands for independence.

In its 29 March editorial, The Age stated that East Pakistan was a 'besieged province', 'confronted by military forces far stronger' than its own, and therefore had no choice but to declare independence and abandon its legitimate claims for greater regional autonomy. Interestingly, The Age foreshadowed the unlikelihood of a political solution to the conflict. The editor wrote: 'A nation cannot be held together indefinitely by the military repression of a hostile majority of people. To the existing differences of race, custom, language and geography will be added an insuperable barrier of hatred and resentment.'

Within days of the onset of hostilities then, Australians were informed not only of the tragic events unfolding in Bangladesh but also understood the origins of the conflict and why Bangladeshis wanted their freedom.

AUSTRALIAN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSES

My research explores how and why Australian citizens provided humanitarian relief to Bangladeshi refugees in India. While the responses of governments are important, they can never tell the whole story. Indeed, Australian aid to Bangladeshi refugees is an example of civil society leading government action. Typically, one would assume that governments lead the people. During the 1971 Liberation War, the opposite was true as citizens influenced government policies, not just on aid but also on the formal recognition of Bangladesh as an independent state.

In essence, my book is about how citizens and non-government organisations (NGOs) mobilised,

fundraised, and distributed aid in a region far from their homes and to individuals with whom they had little in common. Through my research, I found Australians from a cross-section of society who were outraged at the extent of human suffering in the refugee camps, appalled by the injustice of Yahya's military rule and believed that poverty was completely avoidable, if states chose to alleviate it.

My book includes chapters on the aid activities of an array of humanitarian agencies. Chapters cover the activities of the international Red Cross, transnational Christian agencies, and grassroots organisations such as the Freedom from Hunger Campaign.

It is important to note that in 1971, the Australian humanitarian NGO landscape was an over-crowded market. Each organisation competed for brand recognition, prestige, access to political power, and of course, donor dollars. We naturally think of humanitarian NGOs as benign actors. However, my book shows the extent of competition within the sector as they attempted to gain market dominance and outdo one another.

CITIZEN HUMANITARIANISM: AN UNTOLD HISTORY

The final chapter of my book explores humanitarian actions of individuals. This includes a comprehensive analysis of over 2,500 letters written by Australian citizen to their politicians urging the government to give more aid. These letters are a rare find in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and provide valuable new insights into how Australians of all backgrounds understood the conflict in Bangladesh and how they thought they could help. I found myself particularly moved by letters written by children, even though they were ineligible to vote.

Here are two examples:

Less than one month into the conflict, 11-year-old Vicki O'Meara from a middle-class suburb in Melbourne wrote:

Dear Sir,
I know AS10,000,000 [US\$85 million in today's money] is a lot of

money but I think you could spare it for the poor Pakistan refugees. If all the people in Australia were starving, then I don't think you'd have much trouble in finding the \$10,000,000. It's just that they are a long way away from us and it is hard for us to imagine what it would be like. Please hurry and send the \$10,000,000 quickly before it is too late and there will not be any cause because the refugees will all be dead.

What I value in the letters penned by children is that they avoid clichés, are blunt, and usually show a sophisticated understanding of global issues well beyond their years.

In this second example, 10-year-old Belinda Babovic wrote to Opposition Leader (and later Prime Minister) Gough Whitlam from a working-class suburb in Canberra, the nation's capital. In the letter, Belinda wrote in pencil and sparsely used pen for emphasis on particular words. Here, Belinda reveals the importance of television and visual imagery in helping her understand the scale of the refugee crisis. She also discloses that she has been praying for the Australian prime minister to donate more money. The role of news media and religious conviction were repeatedly cited by many Australians in their letters to political leaders.

HUNGER STRIKES

Aside from writing to politicians, citizens also engaged in public performances that inspired onlookers to learn more about the Bangladesh liberation movement in general and the suffering of refugees in particular. For example, Indonesian-born poet Paul Poernomo staged an extended hunger strike on the steps of the Melbourne General Post Office to draw attention to the starvation faced by Bangladeshi refugees. As the weeks rolled on, passers-by gave coins to his donation tin, money that was then forwarded on to the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, which had aid distribution staff working in the West Bengal refugee camps.

The 36-year-old Poernomo took his hunger strike (along with a ragtag of followers) to Canberra. Poernomo fasted for two weeks, this time on the steps of Parliament House. He attracted the attention of politicians and journalists, both of whom promoted and broadcast Poernomo's cause to the nation at large.

After a short stint in hospital due to extreme dehydration, Poernomo continued his fasting tour around the country. He staged his final hunger strike outside the Sydney General Post Office. As in Melbourne, passers-by donated money to support refugee relief activities.

The impacts of Poernomo's hunger strike were far reaching. At a minimum, Poernomo single-handedly raised AS50,000 for the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, making 1971 its most successful year to date. Beyond donations, Poernomo inspired thousands of citizens to lobby their political representatives, urging the Australian government to do more for Bangladeshi refugees and officially support Bangladesh independence.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVISM

Paul Poernomo was not the only

example of an Australian going to extreme lengths to help Bangladeshis. Melbourne upper-class housewife and Catholic humanitarian, Moira Dynon, had a long history of donating powdered and condensed milk to India throughout the 1960s. When the Bhola cyclone hit in 1970, she turned her attention to East Pakistan. Her humanitarian activities increased again when war broke out in 1971. Unlike large, international NGOs, Dynon was an advocate of person-to-person humanitarianism. By focusing on friendship, goodwill and cooperation, Dynon stressed the importance of personal relationships. She believed that every individual could, and should, make a difference to ease avoidable suffering.

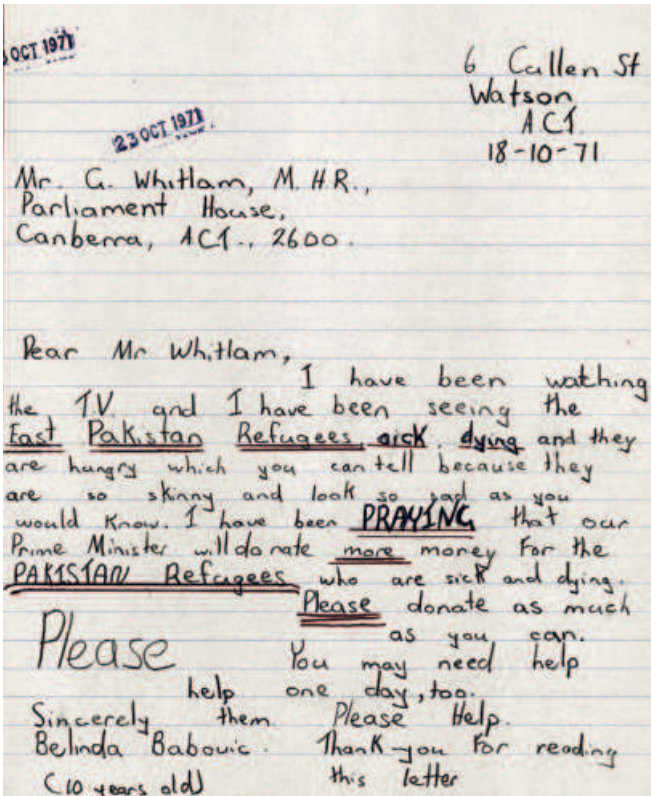
Dynon also proved to be a tireless worker, willing to travel great distances to spread her message. Throughout 1971, Dynon engaged in a speaking tour across Australia, educating Australians on the history and politics of Bangladesh, and why its people demanded independence from Pakistan. She urged her audience to donate money and goods to her small aid agency, which was then forwarded to the West Bengal Council of Women for distribution in the refugee camps.

BROADER SIGNIFICANCE

The examples listed above may seem insignificant on their own. But what they shows is that collectively individual actions can shape public opinion, which then has the capacity to change government policy. In the case of Australia during the Bangladesh Liberation War, the actions of individuals helped push risk-averse politicians to take a moral stand that was at odds with its main ally, the United States. Within the space of 10 months, Australian government policy moved from declared neutrality to supporting openly Bangladeshi independence, even if that meant attracting retaliation from Pakistan and the ire of America. Australian government aid was also increased on five occasions, again in response to public pressure. It is important to note that private aid (that is, donations from Australian citizens) far outstripped government assistance.

From the Australian perspective, the lessons of this event in history are two-fold: one, it provides a rare example of people leading the government, rather than the other way around. It is an inspiring tale of individuals taking action, which had ripple effects throughout Australian society. Two, it shows that Australians educated themselves on the events unfolding in Bangladesh, rather than blindly following the Cold War logic of the United States, which pitted capitalist Pakistan against socialist Bangladesh. This episode reveals Australians as deeply engaged with their Indian Ocean neighbours and committed to creating a just world free from persecution and oppression. I can only hope that Australians and Bangladeshis will remain good neighbours as they confront the complex challenges of the twenty-first century.

Rachel Stevens is a Lecturer in History at the Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, Australian Catholic University in Melbourne.



It was not just affluent Australians who expressed concern about the plight of Bangladeshi refugees. In this example, 10-year-old Belinda Babovic wrote to Opposition Leader (and later Prime Minister) Gough Whitlam from a working-class suburb in Canberra, the nation's capital. In the letter, Belinda wrote in pencil and sparsely used pen for emphasis on particular words.

When Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh 53 years ago, Australian newspapers immediately ran front page articles on the declaration. From the beginning, Australian newspapers described in detail the violence of the Pakistani army and the repressive nature of West Pakistani rule.

On 29 March 1971, broadsheet The Age (Australia's newspaper of record), reported on the brutality of

Sabina sees ties against improving Bhutan as opportunity

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team captain Sabina Khatun is looking forward to some much-needed change of environment as the team flies off to Thimphu today for two friendly matches against Bhutan.

The team will play the two matches at the Changlimithang Stadium in the capital on July 24 and 27, with the aim of some match-practice ahead of October's SAFF Women's Championship.

Bangladesh had last played two friendlies against Chinese Taipei at home in June, losing by 4-0 and 1-0 margins, under new coach Peter Butler. While Bhutan are a weaker side compared to Chinese Taipei, Sabina believes the two matches against the Himalayan nation can provide Bangladesh with some physical and mental boost before their SAFF title defence.

"We have been inside the BFF camp for a long time. So I believe this tour will freshen us up for future competitions," Sabina said prior to the team's departure, adding that Bhutan are no longer pushovers in women's football like they



used to be.

The captain, however, believes the team will need to play stronger opponents in the next FIFA window in order to properly prepare for the regional tournament.

In the first match against Chinese Taipei, coach Butler played a 3-5-2 formation with a high line defence, something that the players were not used to. The 4-0 defeat in that game, which was

the British coach's first match as the head coach of the women in red and green, he was forced to go back to a 4-4-2 formation in the following game.

The team gave a much better account of themselves in that game, and buoyed by that performance, Sabina believes they should have a convincing series against the Bhutanese women.

"We played defensively against Chinese Taipei, but I feel we should play more attacking football against Bhutan and play for victories," said Sabina, the all-time leading scorer for the country.

The team will miss the services of first-team players like Shaheda Akter Ripa, Shamsunnahar Jr. Afeida Khondokar and Tohura Khatun due to exams while striker Krishna Rani Sarkar is still recovering from injury.

Sabina, the poster girl of Bangladesh football, however, is not quite sure of Bangladesh's chances of defending the seven-nation SAFF Women's Championship as she feels, "the departure of stalwarts like Sirat Jahan Swapna, Akhi Khatun and the injury to Krishna could be crucial to their chances in Kathmandu."

India post their highest WT20I total in UAE rout

SPORTS REPORTER

India registered their highest ever total in Women's T20Is in a 78-run victory over the UAE in a Group A fixture of the ongoing ACC Women's Asia Cup at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium in Dambulla yesterday.

In a dominating batting display, India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur and Richa Ghosh smashed blistering half-centuries after opener Shafali Verma hit the ground running with an 18-ball 37. Kaur scored a 47-ball 66 while Ghosh took only 29 deliveries for her 64 to propel India to 201 for five.

UAE's Kanisha Kumari scalped two wickets but had little say in keeping a lid on the proceedings along with the rest of the bowling line up.

Kumari also managed to contribute with the bat as she managed a 32-ball 40, UAE's highest individual score, and Eosha Oza scored a steady 36 ball 38 but could never pose a serious challenge to India's daunting total.

India's Deepti Sharma was the pick of the bowlers with two scalps as the UAE were restricted to 123 for seven.

With a second victory in the bag, India are on the brink of the semifinals and will have the opportunity to progress as unbeaten group-winners when they take on Nepal in their final Group A fixture on Tuesday.

'Management must take responsibility for continuous batting failure'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's side slumped to a seven-wicket defeat against Sri Lanka in their ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup opener in Dambulla on Saturday, once again bringing the team's batting frailties to the fore.

Bangladesh batting collapsed early, three wickets going down for eight runs on what appeared to be a decent batting wicket. After they slumped further to 49 for five, some rearguard effort from skipper Nigar Sultana Joty and middle-order batter Shorna Akter saw Bangladesh reach 111 for 8.

Sri Lanka batters flourished in the flat batting track and reached the target in 17.1 overs.

It was another dismal effort from the Tigresses and Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, who closely monitors women's cricket as its wing development manager, felt that the current state of the batting unit is unbelievable.

"It was unbelievable. The players who are playing now are either new or have returned after having received some chances before. I saw no dependability in the batting unit. I am doubtful if the management were able to make the players see how competent they are technically or how courageous they could be."

Joty struck an unbeaten 59-ball 48 to see Bangladesh cross the 100-run mark. A 14-ball 25 from Shorna got some wind in Bangladesh's sail and it further

highlighted the ineffectiveness of the batting order.

Shorna, who used to bat higher up the order, has not been banked upon to take the game on as she was sent in at lower middle-order. Meanwhile veteran batter Rumana Ahmed was not picked despite the coach and the skipper saying that her experience could have had a big effect on



the side.

"Shorna has been with the side for a while and I don't understand why we still haven't found a settled place for her in the side. Why is she batting at number eight?" Fahim asked.

"The team did not trust her. But if she can bat like that at number eight, she would definitely play a lot better further up the order. At one time, she was batting at five or six. Rabeya [Khan] has potential

but why she isn't improving isn't clear either.

"Rumana not playing means that players better than her are playing. But that didn't seem to be the case. Rumana knows how to bat in the middle-order and she does not get scared of the task from what I have seen. I can understand Jahanara [Alam] not playing due to team combination but the decision on Rumana surprised me," he added.

Fahim feels that the team management needs to take responsibility for the constant batting failures.

"Not only those playing the game but those in charge of the batting unit and coached them must be held accountable too. We can't only blame the players. In the Premier League [WPDL], I saw many playing well but when they go to international matches, they can't perform. So I am not sure whether the players are being able to play their natural game," Fahim analyses.

"The responsibility to create the environment which brings out their natural game, lies with the management. You can't just tell a player to play as she wants. They have failed consistently and the management must take responsibility," he said.

Bangladesh play Thailand in their second Group B game but with questions over batting and the team's current morale, it remains to be seen whether the Tigresses can bounce back.

BCB HP look to avoid defeat against Pak Shaheens

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) High Performance (HP) unit are looking to avoid defeat, having reached 20 without loss at the end of day three after being set a target of 429 runs in their second innings by Pakistan Shaheens in the first four day game at DXC Arena Ground in Darwin yesterday.

Having won the toss on Friday, BCB HP elected to bowl but bowlers failed to trouble Pakistan batters in both innings.

Pakistan put on 468 for three in the first innings, courtesy of Mohammad Hunaira's 218 and Kamran Golam's unbeaten 100. BCB HP pacer Ripon Mondol bagged two wickets in the innings.

The HP unit were bundled out for 266 with Pakistan's right-arm pacer Khurram Shahadat bagging six for 72. Opener Shadman Islam struck 88 in the first innings while Aich Molla and Shahadat Hossain Dipu contributed with 70 and 36, respectively.

Pakistan piled on further 226 runs for three wickets in the second innings to take a 428-run lead as Omar Bin Yousaf hit 100 not out. HP pacers Ripon, Mukidul Islam and Rejaur Rahman Raja bagged a wicket each.

On their multi-format tour of Australia, BCB HP are scheduled to play the second four-day from July 26 before taking on Northern Territory on August 1 in a three-nation bilateral one-day tournament, also involving Pakistan Shaheens.

Marquez replaces Stimac as India coach

AFP, New Delhi

Manolo Marquez has been appointed the coach of the India men's football team, over a month after Igor Stimac's acrimonious exit.

Spaniard Marquez, 55, has been coaching league teams in India since 2020 and will take on the role for the national team "effective immediately", the All India Football Federation said in a statement on Saturday.

"We are delighted to welcome Mr Marquez to this important role," AIFF president Kalyan Chaubey said, adding the federation was looking forward to working with the new coach "in the years ahead".

Marquez, who has more than two decades of international experience in football management, had been the coach of FC Goa since June last year and said he was "grateful" to AIFF for the opportunity as he considers India "my second home".

"I want to do my best to bring success to the millions of fans we have," he said.

Former West Ham and Croatia defender Stimac was sacked in June following India team's poor performance in World Cup qualifiers.

Stimac's five-year tenure ended controversially, with India's federation accusing him of using astrology to pick his teams.

Stimac, who played a World Cup semifinal for Croatia in 1998, became India coach in 2019 and they briefly broke into the top 100 of FIFA's world rankings for only the second time in nearly three decades.

Once called "a sleeping giant" of the sport by former FIFA president Sepp Blatter, India are currently ranked 124th.

'Bickering' and 'cold sweat' as Paris built its Games

AFP, Paris

The seven-year odyssey of the Paris Olympics should reach shore after a spectacular but hopefully serene opening cruise down the Seine on Friday at the end of a voyage that has survived rocky political moments.

Following the horse-trading to win the Games, came the French infighting over how to host them.

Paris was not sure it wanted to risk another rebuff after losing its 2005 bid for the 2012 Games to a London bid that the French believed inferior.

After the 2015 terror attacks on the French capital, Anne Hidalgo, elected Paris mayor in 2014, decided the city needed to act to rebound from the trauma.

Just after his election as president in 2017, Emmanuel Macron promoted France's case to the International Olympic Committee.

Since 2005, France had built a national velodrome and a canoe-kayak venue near Paris.

"By missing the Games, we



built all the facilities," said a former elected official.

After Los Angeles agreed to go for the 2028 Games, France was awarded the 2024 Games in September 2017.

France would host a "sober" Games, using existing facilities and temporary arenas in postcard Paris: the Eiffel Tower, the Invalides, Place de la Concorde. After testing the water with a cautious toe, it added politically-charged swimming in the Seine.

Hidalgo, a Socialist, dredged up an old and unfulfilled promise by Gaullist Jacques Chirac, when he was mayor, that Parisians that would be able to swim in their river.

On July 17, ten days before the Games, Hidalgo took a dip in front of a battery of cameras.

Behind the scenes, the

waters were sometimes murky as the national government, local elected officials, and the organizing committee (COJO) bickered.

Deep down, we are pains in the ass," said one former elected official to describe the relationship with COJO.

There was a race to complete all the work, with finishing touches still being applied days before the start.

Nicolas Ferrand, in charge of the construction of the athletes' village, said he was in a "cold sweat" after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, fearing shortage of materials.

Whatever happens, "two weeks before everyone will say that 'it's a disaster' and in fact it's not," said a close friend of mayor Hidalgo.

Max Verstappen conceded he is no longer leading the pack and feels as if he and Red Bull are "chasing" after he qualified third for the Hungarian Grand Prix behind McLaren duo Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri.

The three-time world champions and series leader has claimed only one pole position in six Grand Prix as Red Bull's grip on a substantial performance advantage has disintegrated and rival teams have drawn level or passed them.

Verstappen has taken 40 pole positions in his career, but only one in Austria since dominating the early season races by taking seven in succession before his spell was broken by Ferrari's Charles Leclerc at the Monaco Grand Prix.

"I love competition," he said on Saturday. "But I like being on top of the competition. At the moment, I feel like we are chasing and having a few more difficult weekends. I don't back out of a fight, but it's just a tricky situation I guess."

In spite of his declining fortunes in qualifying, he has managed without tangible support from struggling teammate Sergio Perez to remain a strong



contender in races and starts Sunday's contest with an 84-point lead ahead of Norris in the drivers' title race.

However, Red Bull have begun to appear increasingly stretched and desperate in a bid to defend their titles as their performance superiority ebbs away, as the Dutchman admitted when he welcomed the team's major upgrade package this weekend.

"Let's see," he said, when asked about his prospects in the race. "The last few races, the McLaren especially has been really good in the race even compared to qualifying."

"Today was a lot colder than expected, I guess, with the clouds and the rain and tomorrow is going to be quite a different day so I just hope that will help us."

The changing weather conditions have influenced and affected recent results as Mercedes won in Austria and Britain, but struggling in the heat at the Hungaroring where Mc Laren shone on Saturday.

"I tried," said Verstappen. "The whole weekend we have been a little bit behind and I think that was also the case in qualifying. I tried to make it as close as possible, but unfortunately just not enough."



BSRM
building a safer nation

WITH BSRM FASTBUILD
YOUR HOME WILL BE BUILT ON TIME
WITH THE BEST QUALITY RODS



COMPLETE
GUIDANCE APP FOR
HOME BUILDING

নির্মাণে
আসি

GET IT ON
Google Play

Download on the
App Store

Normalcy to return in a short time

Foreign minister tells diplomats about protests

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday assured foreign diplomats that the situation arising out of students' quota reform protest will normalise within a short time.

At a briefing at state guesthouse Jamuna, Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud told them that the government regrets the disruption to daily life caused by the recent incidents of violence.

He said anti-liberation, anti-state elements, and religious extremists perpetrated the violence infiltrating into the peaceful student protest for quota reforms in government jobs.

"The government understands the anxiety and concerns that might have surfaced among the diplomatic community and the inconvenience caused by interruption to internet connectivity and temporary movement disruption," he said.

Some 60 foreign diplomats and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



People queue up in front of the DPDC sub-station office on Satmasjid Road yesterday to recharge their prepaid electricity meter cards. Consumers have been suffering for the last three days as they cannot recharge the cards due to the internet outage.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

8 trade bodies throw weight behind govt

Denounce recent acts of vandalism, arson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight major business and trade organisations, including the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), have expressed their support for the government's steps to fight the criminals and evil forces that destroyed state properties.

The other organisations are Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knit Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh Textile Mills Association, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Chattogram Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) and Saarc Chamber of Bangladesh.

In a joint press release issued yesterday, the organisations expressed concern over the losses caused to the economy over the last few days due to the violence.

They feared that if the violence continued, it will further harm the economy, industrialisation, and job creation.

"In this situation, the business community fully supports the government for its steps against the criminals who destroyed state properties."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

PREPAID GAS, ELECTRICITY Users suffer amid internet outage

MD ABBAS and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Thousands of consumers across the nation are facing immense difficulties in getting their cards for prepaid electricity and gas meters recharged amid the ongoing internet outage and the curfew.

People were seen standing in queues for hours on end at power and gas supply offices yesterday. And after failing to recharge their cards, many returned to a home without power or gas or both.

Around 2.5 crore electricity consumers use prepaid meters across the country.

The owner of Rofrof Telecom, a shop on Tajmahal Road in Mohammadpur that provides prepaid card recharge services, said there are two types of machines

used for recharging prepaid electricity and gas meters. One requires internet and the other does not.

He said they are now having to resort to using only the top-up machine that does not require the internet.

Other vendors complained of having insufficient balance on their top-up machines as DPDC's designated agents could not provide them with credit for

the past few days amid the extended bank holidays.

Abdullah Noman, managing director of the Dhaka Power Distribution Company, claimed that they were providing recharge services from 26 zonal offices since Friday.

"As a huge number of people are rushing to the offices, they're having to wait longer. Besides, we've increased our emergency balance by Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000 based on usage, which should be enough for a good number of days for most people," he said.

"We hope the internet services will resume by this time and if not, we will take further necessary measures," he added.

Md Hasib of Tajmahal Road had Tk 120 left in his meter on Thursday morning. He was going to recharge his card that evening but the internet outage happened before he could do so.

"I started feeling sick after standing in line in front of DPDC's Lalmatia office for two and a half hours today [yesterday]. Luckily, I found a shop on my way home from where I could top-up my prepaid card."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Internet unlikely to be restored anytime soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday said they were working to restore the internet communication across the country but could not specify when the services would resume.

A number of communication infrastructures, including public and private data centres, came under attack during the violence surrounding the quota reform protests between Wednesday and Friday, said Zunaid Ahmad Palak, state minister for Posts, Telecommunications and ICT.

"Our engineers are now conducting repair works on the damaged equipment and internet services can resume after the repairs are done."

He made the remarks while speaking at a press briefing at the head office of Bangladesh Telecommunication and Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

Palak apologised for the temporary disruption and said the authorities were trying their best to restore

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

150 arrested over recent violence

Several BNP, Jamaat leaders among them; Amir Khashru, Jamaat secy gen remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 150 people, including leaders and activists of the BNP and Jamaat, were arrested in Dhaka and Gazipur yesterday in connection with recent violence.

The BNP claimed that at least five party leaders were held in the capital.

Law enforcers arrested BNP executive committee member Abdus Salam, adviser to party chairperson Amanullah Aman, International Affairs Secretary Nasir Uddin, Publicity Affairs Secretary Sultan Salahuddin Tuku and Organising Secretary Kazi Sayedul Alam Babul, said BNP media cell member Shamsuddin Didar.

"Many other BNP leaders have been arrested across the country," he told The Daily Star.

Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday arrested 74 leaders and activists of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami from different areas of the capital, DB chief Harun-Or-Rashid told reporters.

He said more suspects for the violence will be arrested soon. Gazipur police arrested 77 people from different areas of the district over attacking police stations and violence.

Nanda Lal, inspector (investigation) of Gacha Police Station, said police arrested 59 people from different areas in Gazipur over attacking the police station on Saturday.

Rafiul Karim, OC of Gazipur Sadar Police Station, said they held 13 people in connection with the recent violence.

Konabari Police Station OC AB Siddique said they held five over the recent violence.

In Savar, families of two BNP men alleged that police yesterday raided and ransacked their homes in Naybari and Chayabithi areas.

However, Dhaka Additional Superintendent of Police Abdullah Kafi denied the allegation.

Police in Pirojpur yesterday arrested Kaukhali upazila Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Nazrul Islam in Biraljhuri area around 3:30pm.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kaukhali Police Station, said Nazrul was arrested in a sabotage case filed previously.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Chiefs of three services meet prime minister

UNB, Dhaka

Chiefs of three services met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday to discuss the current situation of the country.

The meeting started around 4:00pm at the Gono Bhaban.

The prime minister gave them necessary directives during the meeting, said PM's Deputy Press secretary KM Shakhawat Moon.

Chiefs of different law enforcement agencies and the PM's security adviser were also present.

The meeting took place at a time when the country is passing a tense time over violence centring the quota protests. Students of different universities and colleges have been demonstrating for around three weeks, demanding reforms to the quota system in government jobs.



Military vehicles manoeuvre inside Gaza as seen from Israel. Palestinians said a major Israeli operation was underway in the Saudi district of Rafah in the south.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel strikes Gaza, Yemen, Lebanon

64 more Palestinians killed in the Palestinian enclave; major Israeli operation underway in south of Rafah

AFP, Palestinian Territories

The Middle East was reeling from deadly violence yesterday with Israel bombing Gaza, Lebanon and Yemen in quick succession in response to attacks from Iran-backed militant groups.

The Israeli military said it intercepted a missile from Yemen, as it pressed on with its offensive in the besieged Palestinian territory.

Dozens have been killed since Saturday across the Gaza Strip, the civil defence agency said, including in strikes on homes in the central Nuseirat and Bureij areas and displaced people near southern Khan Yunis.

Residents said a major operation was underway in the Saudi district of Rafah in the south, reporting heavy artillery and clashes.

The deadly strikes in Gaza came hours after Hezbollah and its ally Hamas said they fired at Israeli positions from south Lebanon, while Yemen's Houthis rebels vowed to respond to Israeli warplanes hitting a key port.

The fire left raging by the strikes on rebel-held Hodeida port "is seen across the Middle East and the significance is clear," Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1