

Take steps to restore people's faith in political system

ICG urges govt

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League government should take steps to restore people's confidence in the political system in Bangladesh after widespread violence rocked the country, said a report by the International Crisis Group (ICG).

The ruling party's 15-year rule has made the country ripe for political upheaval, the ICG report added.

"It should lift martial law, restore internet access and ensure that those responsible for the killings during the protests are held accountable. It also needs to manage the peaceful reopening of universities and free the scores of students arrested over the last week," it said.

Pierre Prakash, programme director of the ICG Asia division, said the biggest challenge the Awami League government faces is how it handles the situation after the party's heavy-handed response to the protest.

After fifteen years in office, Prime Minister Hasina is facing her most

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Some tamarix trees (jhau gachh) were uprooted during the erosion near the Laboni point of Cox's Bazar beach. The banks of Bay have recently been facing the impact of the rough seas. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVO

95 Libyans detained at suspected military camp

Say South African police

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa authorities rounded up 95 Libyans in a raid yesterday at a farm that appeared to have been converted into a military training base, police said.

The early morning raid was near the town of White River in the northeastern province of Mpumalanga, about 360 kilometres (220 miles) east of Johannesburg, they said.

"The place, which was initially designated as a training site, appears to have been converted into an illegal military training base," police said in a statement.

"The 95 individuals taken into custody are all Libyan nationals and are currently being questioned by the relevant authorities."

BNP

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Fakhrul said that parties and organisations can express their willingness to join the call through issuing statements due to time constraints and difficulties in communications.

A joint statement, signed by all those who would express their willingness to join the call, will be issued soon, he said.

Four more die

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Rampura Police Station.

Doctors of the forensic medicine department at DMCH conducted autopsies on the four bodies yesterday, said sources at the mortuary.

With these four deaths, at least 160 lives have been lost since July 16, when six people were killed in clashes between agitators on one side, and law enforcers, Border Guard Bangladesh, and ruling party activists on the other.

Thirty people died on July 18, 66 on July 19, 25 on July 20, 14 on July 21, six on July 22, three on July 23, four on July 24, and two on July 25.

The overall death toll from the violence may be higher, as The Daily Star could not reach many hospitals where dozens of critically injured patients were taken. Also, many families reportedly collected the bodies of their loved ones from the scene, and this newspaper could not contact those families.

The Daily Star's count of the victims is based solely on hospital sources.

Barack, Michelle

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in the Democratic party even after more than a decade has passed since he was last elected.

Obama has lent his support to Biden during big money fundraisers, which were among some of the biggest blockbuster events of his campaign.

The endorsement could help activate and sustain energy and fundraising for Harris' campaign and it signals he is likely to get on the campaign trail for Harris once she is the presumptive nominee.

Obama initially withheld his endorsement even as Biden, his former vice president, anointed her as his heir apparent. Obama reportedly did not want to put his thumb on the scale as the party worked through the process of determining its nominee.

Cops' FIR runs counter to known facts

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metres during the shooting. Also, Sayed posed no apparent physical threat to the police, Amnesty International said in a statement on July 18, adding that the police's attack on Sayed was reckless and unprovoked.

Sayed's death certificate said he was "brought dead" to the hospital.

Tuhin Wadud, a teacher of the university who saw Sayed's body at the hospital, said there were shotgun pellet wounds all over the body.

Razibul Islam, head of the forensic medicine department at Rangpur Medical College Hospital, said he died of internal haemorrhage caused by the pellets.

He said an autopsy report will be prepared soon but declined to give details.

Asked about the FIR, Deputy Commissioner (Crime) of Rangpur Metropolitan Police Abu Maruf Hossain said many non-students, including Jamaat Shibir and BNP men, reportedly used firearms during the protests. The matter will be clear once the investigation concludes.

WHAT IS IN THE FOOTAGE?

Sayed had his arms wide open with a stick in his right hand. He appears to dodge a brick chip. Gunshots were heard. A man, possibly the one filming, shouted, "He got shot."

Sayed again stretched his arms, and

a second later, he took a few steps back and sat on the ground.

A man rushed to him and helped him stand up. There were blood stains on his neck, nose and other parts of the body.

Three more protesters then joined and carried him away.

Sayed's killing sparked widespread outrage, with many questioning the justification of police's use of lethal weapons on unarmed protesters.

In the following days, at least 156 people were killed and several thousand wounded in deadly clashes across the country.

The government enforced curfew to tackle the situation, and on July 23 issued a circular, taking merit-based recruitment in civil service to 93 percent from 44 percent. The remaining seven percent will be reserved.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, rights activist Nur Khan Liton said police's account in the FIR was unacceptable because the shooting took place in broad daylight and it was a cold-blooded killing.

He said police should warn first and then can only shoot aiming at the legs when they have no other option to protect lives, properties and firearms.

"The problem is the government party men who get jobs in the police force do not care about the rule of law," he told

Kongkon Karmaker contributed to this report.]

The Daily Star.

WHO SHOT HIM?

A source in the police said an officer named Yunus Ali fired a weapon at Sayed during a protest on July 16 without authorisation from higher officials. No details could be known.

DC Maruf said that no action has yet been taken against any policeman involved in the shooting.

He only mentioned that police used shotguns, adding that expert opinions would be sought, and actions would follow if rules were violated.

Meanwhile, a four-member committee, led by Additional Commissioner Saifuzzaman Faruki of Rangpur Metropolitan Police, has been formed to investigate the incident. The committee was asked to file its report in two weeks.

Sayed, the youngest of nine siblings, was a student of English. His grieving father and brother said he dreamt of joining the civil service and changing his family's fate.

A day before his death, he wrote on Facebook that he was ready to sacrifice his life for the cause.

His brother Ramzan said he tried to collect the autopsy report from the hospital on Thursday but was asked to obtain it from the court. The family has not filed any case.

[Kongkon Karmaker contributed to this report.]

End crackdown, restore full access to internet'

FROM PAGE 1

disturbing reports of journalists being threatened by authorities for their news reporting.

Prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigations in line with internationally recognised standards must be carried out into all human rights violations."

Saying that the government has a history of broken promises with regards to human rights and that there is a lack of public trust in the judiciary, the experts urged the government to initiate a credible accountability process with the support of the UN. The experts offered their assistance in this regard.

"We call on the authorities to immediately release all peaceful protesters and ensure due process for those charged and prosecuted in connection with their role in the violence," they said.

Since the start of July, university students and job seekers have been protesting the reinstatement of the quota system in government jobs, and demanding reforms to the system. On June 5, the High Court effectively reinstated the quota system by declaring illegal a 2018 government circular that abolished it.

The Supreme Court on July 10 issued a status quo on the HC verdict.

According to the statement on the OHCHR website, the violence centring the quota reform movement erupted on July 15, after "inflammatory public statements by Government officials and attacks by Government-aligned youth groups on the peaceful protesters. Law enforcement authorities reportedly rushed in to support government-aligned groups and used excessive force, including live bullets, against unarmed protesters."

It said some of the protesters retaliated, destroying and burning public property and vehicles.

Early on July 18, mobile data

was shut off and later that night, the entire country was plunged into digital darkness as broadband internet across the country became unavailable.

The government called a nationwide curfew on the night of July 19, and called in the army.

The statement said the army was given shoot-on-sight orders.

On July 21, the Supreme Court decided to keep seven percent government jobs reserved and open the rest to competition. On July 23, the government issued a circular taking merit-based recruitment in civil service to 93 percent from the previous 44 percent.

According to the OHCHR statement, the authorities in Bangladesh had shut down broadband and mobile internet, preventing access to websites, social media and web-based mobile phone communications.

However, the government and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) have said the internet shutdown occurred due to an attack on the data centres in the capital's Mohakhali. Broadband internet is slowly being restored since the evening of July 23, while mobile data is yet to be restored. Access to social media has been limited.

The experts said, "The government needs to fully restore the internet and access to social media immediately and ensure that local and foreign media are granted full access to report on the developments without being attacked, threatened or pressured.

"The state must uphold people's right to information. Total transparency and accuracy on the numbers of those detained, forcibly

disappeared, killed or subjected to other human rights violations, as well as careful preservation of evidence is essential to ensuring accountability and restoring public trust."

They warned that while a recent

decision by the courts to scale back the controversial quota system was an important step in the right direction, it will not be sufficient to restore the people's trust and confidence in the government.

"To regain public trust, the Government needs to take responsibility and ensure a credible process of investigation and accountability to hold perpetrators to account."

They are in contact with the Government of Bangladesh on this matter, the statement said.

The UN experts are Cecilia Bailliet, independent expert on human rights and international solidarity; George Katrougalos, independent expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; Morris Tidball-Binz, special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Margaret Satterthwaite, special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; Irene Khan, special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Surya Deva, special rapporteur on the right to development; Farida Shaheed, special rapporteur on the right to education; Gina Romero, special rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; Mary Lawlor, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Alice Edwards, special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Matthew Gillett (chair); Ganna Yudkivska (vice-chair on communications); Priya Gopalan (vice-chair on follow-up); Miriam Estrada Castillo and Mumba Malila, Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Aua Baldé (chair-rapporteur); Gabriella Citroni (vice-chair); Grażyna Baranowska and Ana Lorena Delgadillo Pérez, Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

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