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It's a flagrant deception

Says TIB on making protesters read statement in DB custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detaining quota reform protest coordinators as a "weapon to suppress" the movement and making them read a statement withdrawing their programme on video is "flagrant deception and unconstitutional", said Transparency International Bangladesh yesterday.

In a statement, the anti-graft watchdog condemned the act, terming it "hypocrisy and illegal".

"To justify human rights violations — large-scale killings, detentions, and unjust actions — carried out by law enforcement agencies and to suppress the movement, the government, ruling party, state-run institutions, and Detective Branch (DB) have employed false narratives that are "self-destructive, anti-people, and cruel

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A woman finally spots her husband inside a prison van while another breaks down in tears at the sight of her loved one. Yesterday, families thronged the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka to catch a glimpse of their relatives, who were arrested in cases filed over the recent violence.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

More than just NUMBERS

A 17-year-old boy shot dead in Rampura. A 16-year-old boy died from bullet wounds in Jatrabari. A 32-year-old furniture shop employee fatally shot in Chattogram. At least 163 lives (the actual number could be much higher) were lost when law enforcers opened fire on protesters during the recent unrest. But these victims are not just statistics; they are children, husbands, and friends. In this report, we try to know the story of three such names among these tragic numbers.



'Ma don't worry, I'll be home in two minutes'

Samudra's mother recalls his last words after the 17-year-old died of bullet injuries

MASHFIQ MIZAN

On every Friday, Mostofa Zaman Samudra, a 17-year-old SSC graduate, goes to Juma prayers with his father, Tajul Kal.

They did the same on July 19.

After prayers, Tajul returned to their rented apartment in Rampura, Samudra did not. He told his father that he would meet his friends, promising him he'd return shortly.

But he did not.

Hours later, Samudra's lifeless, bullet-ridden body was brought home on a rickshaw-van after police and BGB opened fire at protesters in Rampura.

Samudra was supposed to get admitted to Siddheswari College just a day later; instead, his body returned to his village in Munshiganj, wrapped in a white shroud for burial.

A MOTHER'S WORST FEAR REALISED

As Samudra did not return home, his mother, Masuda Jaman, grew anxious. She immediately called him. "Ma don't worry, I'll be home in two minutes," he reassured her.

However, as minutes turned into hours and repeated calls went unanswered, her fears intensified.

By that time, horrors engulfed Rampura, Banasree, and Badda as bullets

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I couldn't save my boy, three bullets had pierced his body

Says father of slain 16-year-old Akash

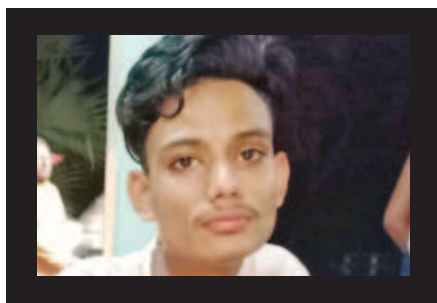
ANWARUL HAIDER, Noakhali

"We were going for breakfast when my son got shot. He died without even having something to eat."

Akram Hossain could not hold back his tears as he recounted the tragic incident on July 21, when his eldest son, Arafat Rahman Akash, 16, was fatally shot on Chittagong Road in Dhaka's Jatrabari area.

"Around 11:00am, after the curfew was relaxed, Akash and I went out to have breakfast near our home in Masjid Goli (alley). Suddenly there were shots fired, and people scattered and ran to wherever they could take shelter.

Akash was a few yards behind me, so I looked back to see if he was alright, and saw him lying on the ground," said Akram, a fruit vendor from Wasekpur



village under Noakhali's Sonaimuri upazila.

"At first, I thought he was scared and had laid down to take cover. As I got closer, I found him in a pool of blood. He was murmuring, 'Father, save me... save me'. But I couldn't save my boy. Three bullets had pierced his body."

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Faruk's family stares at a bleak future

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Mohammad Faruk, 32, an employee at a furniture shop in Shulakbahar, Chattogram, was fatally shot as Jubo League and Chhatra League clashed with quota reform protesters on July 16.

He was returning to work from lunch in the Muradpur area.

Faruk's family, comprising his wife Sima Akhter, their eight-year-old son Fahim, and five-year-old daughter Fahima, now faces an uncertain future.

Faruk's father, Abdul Dulal, a van driver, said, "Faruk was crossing the road after having lunch at a hotel in Muradpur when he was shot around 3:00pm on July 16. He did not belong to any party or participate in the movement. Still, my son had to die,"

Abdul Dulal told The Daily Star.

Faruk, the second of four brothers and two sisters, was a pillar of support for his family.

He consistently sent money for his mother's medical treatment while managing his family's expenses. Despite their roots in Noakhali's Begumganj area, Faruk and his family had been living in Lalkhan Bazar, Chattogram, since his marriage to Sima Akhter 17 years ago.

Sima Akhter recounted their 17-year marriage and Faruk's eight years of work at the furniture store. "Faruk was always worried about the education of our children," she said.

On July 28, Abdul Dulal, accompanied by Sima and the children, visited the

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'Don't harass innocents'

NHRC urges authorities to arrest saboteurs based on reliable information

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Bangladesh yesterday urged the authorities concerned to identify and try the saboteurs based on reliable and specific information in connection with the recent violence.

It also urged them not to make mass arrests and respect the human rights of the citizens.

Kamal Uddin Ahmed, chairman of the commission, said, "A number of lives were lost and national properties were destroyed in the violence, which is very unfortunate and a violation of human rights. No innocent person should be harassed while identifying and arresting the criminals."

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Who picked up Nahid first time?

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Key organiser of the quota reform protest, Nahid Islam, a Dhaka University student, was allegedly picked up by law enforcers early on July 20, although law enforcers deny their involvement.

However, video footage obtained by The Daily Star shows that a vehicle of Rapid Action Battalion-3, one SUV, a microbus, and two motorcycles were present near the Sabujbagh residence from where Nahid was picked.

Nahid was found battered and unconscious in Purbachal over 24 hours later. He claimed he was physically tortured until he lost consciousness.

After regaining consciousness under a bridge, Nahid managed to reach home by auto-rickshaw and was subsequently hospitalised.

But he was picked up again while undergoing treatment at Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital on July 26. This time, the Detective Branch (DB) claimed to have taken him and other coordinators of the quota reform movement into custody for "their safety".

Before Nahid was picked up by the DB again, he told this newspaper that plainclothes men, numbering 25-30, detained him after 2:00am the night he was picked up for the first time.

They broke into his friend's house, dragged him out, and took him inside a microbus, he said.

Before they blindfolded him, he spotted a Rab vehicle, he said, which is consistent with the eye

witness accounts and the video this newspaper saw.

WHAT WE SAW

The Daily Star reviewed footage from various CCTV cameras near the building where Nahid was picked up from his friend's residence.

The footage confirms that at least one Rab-3 vehicle was present at the scene between 1:51am and 2:12am on July 20.

Around 1:51am, two motorcycles, an SUV, a microbus, and a Rab van stopped in front of a camera near Nandipara Govt Primary School in Sabujbagh.

Nahid's friend's house, where he slept that night, was only 100-150 metres away from this location.

These vehicles came from the Nandipara intersection side and returned from the same side after around 20 minutes.

During this period, Nahid was picked up, according to witnesses and Nahid himself.

Notably, the nationwide curfew had already begun by then, and only ambulances and a few trucks were moving around the area, aside from the vehicles that arrived with the Rab-3 vehicle.

CCTV footage showed that both motorcycles had pillars and most of the car seats were occupied. The first microbus was closer to the house.

The SUV and the Rab-3 van waited for 10 minutes. Four to five men were seen waiting and talking on the phone behind the SUV.

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CENTRAL POLICE HOSPITAL

At least 259 cops took treatment there

DIPAN NANDY

For over a week, three-year-old Namira and one-year-old Nadira have had their smiles wiped off their faces.

Their father Syed Masudur Rahman, a traffic police sergeant, was their only playmate at home.

After returning home from work, he would spend some quality time with them before dinner.

But now, he lies on a hospital bed after a mob attacked him with iron rods and pipes.

On July 18, Masud, a sergeant of the Wari Traffic Division under Dhaka Metropolitan Police, left his Aftabnagar home for his duty.

But even before he could make it, he was attacked right near his house.

"I was beaten indiscriminately with sticks. I tried to enter a bank for shelter but I failed. Then, I was attacked again," he told The Daily Star at the Central Police Hospital in the capital's Rajarbagh recently.

With injuries to his head, face, hands, and legs, Masud contacted his seniors after he was finally able to take shelter inside the bank.

"But they couldn't reach the spot. Then my wife came there and begged the attackers to let me go. They made me apologise too. Finally, I was let go."



PHOTO: STAR

An injured traffic police at Central Police Hospital in the capital's Rajarbagh.

At least 47 other cops are currently being treated at the hospital, with one of them in the Intensive Care Unit.

Speaking to this correspondent, many of them, like Masud, said the attacks were not carried out by students.

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