

STARS WITH SPINE

Media personalities who voiced out for students

“The hottest places in Hell are reserved for those who, in a period of moral crisis, maintain their neutrality,” Italian poet Dante Alighieri wrote in his famous ‘Inferno’.

MAHIYA TABASSUM

This quote was widely circulated on social media during the peak of the student-led quota reform protest, which evolved into an anti-government movement. This protest became one of the most significant and largest mass uprisings the country has witnessed since its independence.

In such challenging times, when protesters and civilians were indiscriminately killed, wholesale arrests, block raids, and a nationwide internet shutdown violated citizens' fundamental rights, keeping the nation on edge for weeks—only a few had the courage to raise their voices against the oppression and injustice.

As early as July 15, violent clashes erupted between student protesters and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists at Dhaka University, resulting in around 300 injuries. In response, a wave of support emerged from celebrities, with some courageously criticising the former AL-

Sadia Ayman voiced their concern in a straightforward manner and criticised the former ruling party for hard-handling the demonstrators.

Filmmaker Mishuk Moni criticised the former government's tendency to label dissenters as traitors, saying, “In this country, speaking against the government labels you a traitor. Criticising any government official's corruption also makes you a traitor. Participating in a movement for rightful demands makes you a traitor.”

On July 17, bands Artcell, Chirkutt, Shironamhin, Arbovirus, and Bangla Five joined the chorus of support. Arbovirus stated, “Quota reform is now a demand of the time.” Tasrif, vocalist of Kureghar, raised questions, “Doesn't your heart tremble when you beat another human? Those who are demanding their rights, are they so unknown to you?”

Actors Shobnom Bubby and Puja Chery raised concerns about violence. Puja stated, “What kind of freedom is this? Such violence towards women in an



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Nisho voiced concern for the victims. Rapper and barrister Towfique Ahmed offered legal assistance to protesters, while actor Ziaul Faruq Apurba urged the former government to seek peaceful solutions.

Following a 150-hour internet blackout, services resumed on July 23, leading to increased celebrity activism. On July 30, as the Student Against Discrimination (SAD) Movement announced new programmes, social media platforms were flooded with red profile pictures in solidarity. Director Mostofa Sarwar Farooki were among those who joined this campaign and raised voice against oppression publicly. He wrote lengthy post on his official Facebook page, questioning the accountability of those in power.

Director Shihab Shaheen posted a photo featuring the children killed in recent violence on that same day. Referring to former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's metro rail visit, Shihab said, “I used to see leaders and public figures visiting the homes of the affected

or distressed, offering comfort, inquiring about their well-being, embracing them, and sometimes even apologising. Where has that culture gone?”

Actress Sadia Ayman wrote a sarcastic post on her social media handle hinting at the artistes who visited BTV station and mourned over inanimate objects. Popular content creator Salman Mohammad Muqtadir stood with the students since the initial days of the protests and provided assistance to them on ground.

A vast array of celebrities showed support by changing their profile pictures red, including Kamar Ahmad Simon, Akram Khan, Amitabh Reza Chowdhury, Leesa Gazi, Sadia Khalid Recti, Siam Ahmed, Azmeri Haque Badhan, Zakia Bari Mamo, Oni Hasan, Zohad, Arafat Kazi, Prince Mahmud, and many more.

On August 1, visual media artistes organised a protest rally at Farmgate intersection in Dhaka. Notable attendees included Ashfaq Nipun, Azmeri Haque Badhan, and Nazia Haque Orsha.

Badhan, who had attended the Cannes Film Festival, emotionally stated, “It could have been my daughter at the protest, she could have lost her life... Any state that kills its own people to assert power, cannot be a democracy.”

Following Sheikh Hasina's resignation on August 5, celebrities expressed both joy and caution. Pori Moni posted, “How my independence was taken away on this day three years ago, mother nature takes its revenge,” later adding a call for peace. Ashfaq Nipun declared, “Bangladesh is now FREE from the long rule of the tyrant Sheikh Hasina!”

This unprecedented display of solidarity from Bangladesh's entertainment industry played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of the protesters and shaping public opinion during this pivotal moment in the country's history. Their courage in speaking out against injustice, even in the face of potential repercussions, set a powerful example for future generations and contributed to the eventual success of the movement.



PHOTOS: STAR & COLLECTED

led government's harsh response to the protesters. The following day, six people were killed amid the clashes.

On July 16, veteran actor and freedom fighter Sohail Rana, renowned cultural figure Ramendu Majumdar, noted playwright Mamunur Rashid, Actors Equity Bangladesh General Secretary Ranwak Hasan, actor Niloy Alamgir, among others, backed quota reform. Meanwhile, director Ashfaq Nipun, filmmaker Mishuk Moni, author Mohammad Nazimuddin, director Khijir Hayat, actors Pori Moni and

independent country is unacceptable. I strongly condemn it.”

Sina Hasan from Bangla Five was among the firsts to boycott the former government-funded **Joy Bangla Concert**, saying, “As an artiste, I am boycotting it. I do not want to be invited to this sycophantic concert either as an artiste or an audience member.”

On July 18, as 229 platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) were deployed nationwide and at least 29 people were killed, prominent celebrities Shakib Khan, Chanchal Chowdhury, and Afran

NEWS

UN, US, Canada, EU

FROM PAGE 12 independently, and my Office stands ready to support this. The demands for justice and reform must be heeded.”

At this pivotal moment, Bangladesh's international human rights obligations can serve as a road map for the transitional authorities and all political leaders.

“This is a time for national healing, including through an immediate end to violence, as well as accountability that ensures the rights of victims to truth and reparations, and a truly inclusive process that brings the country together on the way forward,” Türk added.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged calm and restraint by all sides and emphasised the importance of a peaceful, orderly and democratic transition.

Guterres said he stands in full solidarity with the people of Bangladesh and calls for the full respect of their human rights and underscored the need for a full, independent, impartial

and transparent investigation into all acts of violence, said Farhan Haq, his deputy spokesperson, in a briefing in New York.

The US saluted the military for forming an interim government instead of cracking down further on protesters, said Matthew Miller, spokesman for the US state department.

“If it is true in fact that the army resisted calls to crack down on lawful protesters, that would be a positive development,” he said, adding that the transition to an interim government is conducted in accordance with Bangladesh's laws.

A full and transparent investigation into the rights abuses is vital to ensure accountability for the deaths, he said, while also urging all parties to refrain from further violence and maintain calm.

Meanwhile, the EU diplomats in Bangladesh said they were “very concerned” about reports of attacks on minority groups and places of worship. On Monday, more than 100 people

were killed in mob violence in the capital and other districts. Police stations and Awami League offices also came under attack and looting.

Canada strongly condemns the human rights violations, deaths, torture, arbitrary arrests and lethal force used against the people, said its Foreign Minister Melanie Joly.

“During this transition, we urge all parties to respect and uphold democratic institutions and processes and the rule of law. It is vital that all those arrested in recent weeks be accorded due process in the justice system and that a full and impartial investigation be pursued to ensure accountability for crimes committed.”

Canada calls for a quick and peaceful return to a democratic and inclusive civilian-led government in Bangladesh.

“We urge the people of Bangladesh to unite around the principles of freedom and democracy upon which their country was founded.”

Insecurity grips

FROM PAGE 12 army about the recoveries.

They also informed that around 200 students had been on guard at churches and temples in Mirpur since 9:00am yesterday.

Students were also seen guarding the fire-ravaged Pallabi Police Station.

Two army officers, visiting the site, said they saw firearms scattered all around.

Requesting anonymity, they said they came to know from locals that some firearms were looted.

Fire service officials said at least 29 police stations had been torched across the country. But, the fire service has not been informed of all the arson attacks.

In the capital, Uttara East, Khilgaon, Wari, Ashulia, Badda, Jatrabari, Adabor, and Lalbagh police stations and a deputy commissioner's office in Kallyanpur were ransacked and set on fire.

On the streets of Mirpur 2, Mirpur 10, Agargaon, Bijoy Sarani, Dhanmondi and Bangla Motor, both male and female students controlled traffic. Similarly, general people were seen maintaining traffic in Bogura.

The duty officer of the fire service said they rescued 50 policemen trapped inside the burning Mirpur Police Station on Monday night.

An official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said, “Most of the police stations were vandalised, torched, and weapons were looted. How will the police perform their duties in this situation?”

Members of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party were deployed to ensure security at all police stations and Dhaka airport, the officer said.

In another development, there was an attempt to free militants from the Kashipur High Security Central Jail in Gazipur. Convicts inside the jail also tried to break free during the attack, officials said.

Last night, a group of at least 50 people vandalised the empty house of former DMP commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia in Nikunja, locals said.

The property is registered under the name of his younger son, Asif Mahadeen.

In his first briefing since Hasina's departure, Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, before he was replaced as inspector general of police, yesterday urged members of the force to perform their duties with patience and strong morale.

In a video message sent by the Police Headquarters, he urged the political and student leaders to request the countrymen to refrain from attacking

police.

Many top police officials went into hiding after the fall of the government.

Hasina's resignation came following three weeks of clashes between police, Awami League men, and protesters that left over 200 people, including many policemen, dead.

He stated that steps will be taken to find a logical solution to the problems that the police face.

Earlier, Additional Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidur Rahman told reporters at Rajarbagh Police Lines that they were trying to establish a chain of command soon.

He urged the commanders to understand the situation and gradually return to the workplaces, and not pay any heed to rumours.

AFP reported that Bangladesh Police Association, which represents non-cadre police officers, said its members were going on strike.

“Until the safety of every police member is secured, we are declaring a strike,” said the association.

At least two dozen cadre officers wrote on Facebook about abstaining from work.

Besides, Additional DIG Sohel Rana in a statement said, “The problem is in the leadership, not the police force. The guilty will be punished. Please, do not attack innocent policemen.”

Attacks on Hindu houses, temples, businesses go on

FROM PAGE 12 was also vandalised there.

Affected villagers informed the police but they did not take any action.

In Birampur upazila, the house of Dilip Kundu, a fertiliser and agrochemical trader, was attacked. He said the plan to attack was even announced on a loudspeaker to gather more people. They also attacked, vandalised and looted his shops.

Several Hindu families of Bochaganj upazila came under attack and arson, said Chakrabarty.

In Patuakhali's Kuakata, a temple was attacked and set ablaze, and the homes of two members of the Hindu community were vandalised yesterday.

Around 5:00pm, around 20-25 people attacked the home of Ananta Mukherji and razed the Radha-Krishna temple adjacent to it.

Less than an hour later, another group ransacked Kolapara municipal Mayor Bipul Halder's house and set it on fire. They also burnt a private car of the mayor parked in front of the house.

In Barishal's Gouranadi upazila, miscreants vandalised and looted a clothing store owned by Bhola Saha on Monday night.

Sons of Ghulam Azam

FROM PAGE 12 As they went inside, family members of the victims waited outside the headquarters.

Anisha Islam Insha, the teenage daughter of forcibly disappeared Ismail Hossain Baten, broke down in tears after having to leave without her father.

Timber trader Baten was allegedly picked up from Dhaka by members of a government security agency in 2019.

“I have been walking the streets of Dhaka holding my father's photo all these years, and I had hoped I would be able to walk back home with him

Meanwhile, the head teacher of Mahilara Secondary School was assaulted in her home in Mahilara union.

Attackers also set ablaze the house of Jibon Krishna Piplai, a prominent businessman in Barishal city, but residents came forward to extinguish the fire.

In the predominantly Hindu areas of the city's Katpatti, Chawkbazar and Bazar Road, miscreants were seen running around with sharp weapons, reported our correspondent.

Arichul Haque, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said they could not get out of their station due to security concerns.

In Bogura, Tapan Kumar Chakrabarty, secretary of Bogura's Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, said, “Members of the Hindu community here are in a state of panic as their businesses, shops and homes were attacked yesterday [Monday].”

On Monday evening, attackers set ablaze some haystacks in some Hindu homes in Palpara village in Bogura's Gabtali upazila, Ashik Iqbal, OC of Gabtoli Police Station, confirmed to The Daily Star.

Similar incidents were reported in at least 27 districts during the first hours of the government's ouster.

Md Mainul Islam

FROM PAGE 12 1991. He has also served in police's elite force, Rapid Action Battalion.

Meanwhile, the contract of Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun as the IGP was cancelled in a separate circular on the same day.

Mamun's removal comes in the wake of a complete breakdown of law and order situation across Bangladesh. Chowdhury was first appointed as the IGP on September 21, 2022.

He was scheduled to retire on January 11, 2023. However, on January 9, the government appointed him on a contractual basis for one and a half years.

Earlier in July, the government had extended his contract by one year.

2,400 get bail

FROM PAGE 11 and Shahjahanpur police stations, 203 with Mirpur and Sher-e-Bangla police stations, 194 with Badda and Bhatara police stations, 193 with Uttara Purbo, Uttara Paschim, and Turag police stations, 133 with Kadamtoli police station, 121 with Tejgaon, Tejgaon industrial, and Hatirjheel police stations, 115 with Rampura and Sabujbagh police stations, and 110 arrested in cases lodged with Gulshan and Banani police stations.

According to the court records, over 270 cases were lodged with 39 police stations in the city between July 16 and August 4. The complainants of most cases were police personnel.

The charges of the cases include illegal gathering, rioting, assaulting law enforcers, damaging assets, and arson.

Quasem (Arman), the younger son of executed Jamaat leader and war criminal Mir Quasem Ali.

Afroza Islam Anghi, sister of forcibly disappeared BNP leader Sajedul Islam Sumon and one of the coordinators of Mayer Daak, a platform for the families of the victims of enforced disappearances, told The Daily Star that Azmi and Ahmad have been found.

They were handed over to their family members in Uttara's Diabari yesterday morning, she said.

Azmi had been forcibly detained since August 23, 2016, and Mir Ahmad, since August 9, 2016.