

AUGUST 5 VIOLENCE Death toll in Savar rises to 36

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The death toll centring the violence on August 5, the day Sheikh Hasina resigned from office, rose to 36, according to hospital sources.

On that day, violent clashes between police-backed Awami League activists and protesters broke out.

Most of the deaths were caused by gunshot wounds, they said.

Yusuf, duty manager of Enam Medical College Hospital, said that 27-year-old Sadek succumbed to his bullet injuries while undergoing treatment yesterday.

With this, the authorities reported 16 deaths, including those brought dead there and who died in the hospital.

Gonoshasthaya Samaj Vitik Medical College Hospital in Ashulia reported 10 bullet-riddled bodies, including one unknown victim.

Earlier, Ashulia Women and Children Hospital confirmed the death of three people while another victim died in Habib Clinic in Ashulia.



The house of Salman F Rahman, private industry and investment adviser to former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, was ransacked and set on fire in the capital's upscale neighbourhood of Gulshan. Locals said the house was torched on Monday, the day Hasina resigned and fled the country.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Over 300 inmates flee Kashimpur, Kushtia jails

STAR REPORT

At least six bodies of prisoners were recovered from Kashimpur High Security Central Jail in Gazipur early yesterday, hours after a group of prisoners escaped following demonstrations by some inmates and attack from outside by their "relatives".

Gazipur Deputy Commissioner Abul Fateh Mohammad Safiqul Islam yesterday said, "We are yet to ascertain how many prisoners fled."

The bodies were taken to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital around 4:00am, said Abul Fazal, officer at the hospital's emergency department.

This newspaper could not confirm how the six prisoners died as the jail's senior superintendent, Subrata Kumar Pal, could not be reached over the phone despite repeated attempts.

Quoting jail officials, Bangla daily Prothom Alo reported that at least 209 prisoners fled.

A group of prisoners started demonstrating around noon on Tuesday demanding release. They tried to flee by breaking a wall and scaling it using a ladder. Jail guards tried to quell the trouble. At

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Stay calm, refrain from violence

FROM PAGE 1

"I congratulate the brave students who took the lead in making our 'Second Victory Day' possible and to the people for giving your total support to them. Let us make the best use of our new victory. Let us not let this slip away because of our mistakes."

THE ACQUITTAL

Later in the day, a Dhaka tribunal acquitted Prof Yunus in a labour law violation case.

Three other top officials of

Grameen Telecom were also acquitted.

MA Awal, chairman (in-charge) of the Labour Appellate Tribunal, delivered the verdict, Khaja Tanvir Ahmed, a lawyer for Yunus, told 'The Daily Star'.

On January 1, the Labour Court-3 of Dhaka sentenced Yunus, also chairman of Grameen Telecom, and its directors Ashraf Hassan, M Shahjahan and Nurjahan Begum to six months' imprisonment each for violating labour laws.

The four were also fined Tk 30,000 each, in default of which they would have to serve 25 more days in prison.

On January 28, Prof Yunus and his colleagues filed appeals with the Labour Appellate Tribunal against the sentence.

On September 9, 2021, Labour Inspector (General) SM Arifuzzaman filed the case with the labour court against the four.

The court framed the charges in the case on June 6 last year. It also

recorded four prosecution witnesses' statements.

The sections of the labour law under which the case was filed carry a maximum of six months' imprisonment.

According to the case documents, Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments officials inspected the Grameen Telecom office in the capital's Mirpur on August 16, 2021, and found several violations of labour laws.

BB, NBR grapple with staff anger

FROM PAGE 1

Employees started agitating at the central bank in the commercial district of Motijheel right after they arrived at work in the morning, demanding the resignation of officials who are serving contractually. The governor, deputy governors, and the banking adviser are hired contractually.

In the face of protests, Deputy Governor Kazi Sayedur Rahman resigned, while two deputy governors - Habibur Rahman and Md Khurshid Alam - decided to step down. Banking adviser Md Abu Farah Naser also decided to go, according to officials. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit chief Masud Biswas was forced to leave his office. He then decided to quit.

At a hurried press briefing, BB spokesperson Mezbaur Haque said some deputy governors decided to resign amid protests and some were forced to step down.

Widespread protests came two days after Sheikh Hasina's sudden exit from Bangladesh amid a popular uprising. The collapse of her government created a power vacuum

that led to further violence, alongside the joy and relief on the streets of Dhaka.

Partisan decisions and corruption weakened the financial system, once controlled by Awami League loyalists, during the party's 15-year iron grip on power.

A similar scene of anger played out at the National Board of Revenue, as officials called for the resignation of its chairman, Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem.

Economists say unruly protests are not the way to reform the regulatory bodies and can upend the financial sector.

Another powerful regulator, the Securities and Exchange Commission, passed two days without its boss - Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam. The chairman stayed away from work fearing reprisals from colleagues, an official said, asking not to be named.

These activities are not very uncommon during a mass uprising as people vent anger on the high-ups, according to Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute. "There should be a planned

process of streamlining the financial institutions and regulatory bodies. The officials involved in malpractices will face consequences. No one should take the law into their own hands," he said.

"What we saw at the central bank was very disturbing. The central bank's top officials are now completely inactive, which will make the institution inactive," Ahsan Mansur said.

The interim government, which is being installed with Professor Muhammad Yunus as its head, will now decide on the resignations of the deputy governors.

The new government should be formed without delay because it needs time to find eligible people to run institutions, according to Ahsan Mansur.

On top of these protests, a gloomy report came from S&P Global Ratings. It said Bangladesh's political crisis has further undermined sovereign credit support since it lowered its long-term sovereign credit rating on July 30 this year. However, credit metrics may still support the ratings at the current level if the situation

stabilises soon.

The protests that led to the abrupt resignation of Hasina on August 5 have exacerbated downside risks to economic growth, fiscal performance, and external metrics, S&P said.

The week was rife with commotions in the corporate world. On Tuesday, employees of Islami Bank Bangladesh staged a demonstration against alleged plundering from the bank by S Alam Group, a corporate giant with ties to Hasina. They also briefly barred some officials from the bank's head office in Motijheel.

The demonstrators alleged that they were deprived of various benefits for over a decade, following changes in the bank's ownership and board. Some employees also demonstrated at the bank's headquarters, demanding the resignation of deputy managing directors and other officials appointed by S Alam Group.

A group of officials at Sonali Bank yesterday called for the state-run lender's managing director to provide incentives and promotions to the officials who were "deprived" of benefits in the past several years.

Gaza City braces for fresh offensive Israel orders residents to evacuate Beit Hanoon, Beit Lahiya areas

AGENCIES

Israel ordered residents and displaced Palestinians to evacuate the Beit Hanoon and Beit Lahiya areas of Gaza City yesterday, as reports said a "large scale" Israeli army operation is expected to begin there soon.

"For your own safety, evacuate immediately to the known shelters in the centre of Gaza City," Israeli army spokesman Avichay Adraee said.

In a nearby Gaza City neighbourhood, Al-Tuffah, an Israeli airstrike on a house killed three Palestinians, medics said.

Later yesterday, 10 Palestinians were killed in two separate Israeli strikes in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. Medics said one strike killed three people on a motorcycle west of Khan Younis, while seven others were killed in tank shelling that hit a tent encampment in Abassan town, east of the city.

The health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said that at least 39,677 people have been killed in the offensive, which entered its 11th month yesterday. The toll includes 24 deaths in the past 24 hours, according to ministry figures.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday evening that both Iran and Israel should avoid escalating conflict, in his most direct wording towards US ally Israel on the Middle East's spiralling tensions.

"No one should escalate this conflict. We've been engaged in intense diplomacy with allies and partners, communicating that message directly to Iran. We communicated that message directly to Israel," Blinken told reporters.

Swearing-in tonight

FROM PAGE 1

General Waker-Uz Zaman hoped that normalcy would return within three to four days as the situation across the country is improving significantly.

Those involved in the crimes committed over the past few days will not be spared and legal action will be taken against them, he said.

The army chief briefed the media at the Army Headquarters yesterday, two days after Hasina resigned and fled the country amid an uprising.

On Tuesday night, President Mohammed Shahabuddin gave his consent to the proposal of the key student protest organisers for making Prof Yunus the interim government chief.

Since then, the people waited to know when the government would take charge and bring the prevailing situation under its control.

Yesterday, General Waker-Uz Zaman said he had talked to Prof Yunus.

"I felt very good talking to him. It seemed to me that he is very eager to take up the responsibility. I'm certain that he will be successful in taking us to a democratic process, and that we will benefit from it."

General Waker-Uz Zaman said they have discussed with political parties and protest organisers about making Prof Yunus the interim government chief.

He said they talked to the president about it and made the proposal.

He added that Prof Yunus will reach Bangladesh today.

General Waker-Uz Zaman hoped that Prof Yunus would get support from all political parties and students, and he would be successful in discharging his duties.

"The navy chief, the air force chief and I ... We all will support him," he

said.

He praised students and volunteers working to maintain traffic on the city streets in the absence of traffic police and to clean different vandalised sites and requested them to continue the good work.

He said students, following his request, also worked to prevent looting and other criminal activities committed outside Dhaka.

The army chief said he talked to commanders and general officers commanding (GOC) yesterday and came to know that the situation was improving significantly.

He urged people not to believe any rumors involving the army.

General Waker-Uz Zaman said work is on to revamp the police force as a new inspector general of police has already been appointed and hoped that police personnel would start performing their duties soon.

"I want to assure that the army, navy, and air force were with the people and will be with them," he said.

Responding to a query of a reporter when the interim government members can take the oath, the army chief said they were trying their best to hold the event today.

He said there was a proposal to hold the programme in the evening, but it would be tight given that Prof Yunus will reach Dhaka around 2:10pm.

"In that case, we may hold the programme at 8:00pm."

When his comment was sought about the people's concern over the recent incidents of looting and vandalism, General Waker-Uz Zaman said he has taken responsibility of all people and sought cooperation from political leaders in this regard as there were possibilities of such incidents during the transition of power.

"They [political leaders] assured me

of their best possible cooperation. Even though some incidents took place and there are some reasons behind it. The situation, however, is getting normal."

He said police personnel were not on the ground and it was not possible to fill the void with the army personnel.

However, the army personnel have been trying their best and they rescued thousands of people, police personnel and are guarding different important establishments like the airport, and the secretariat, said General Waker-Uz Zaman.

"I'm very sorry and embarrassed for what has taken place in the first one or two days."

Apart from army personnel, navy and air force personnel are working, he said.

"We have tried our best. But still some incidents happened. It is simply because we did not have enough strength. But I'm sure when the police force gets revamped, the void will easily be filled," he said.

"But I want to say that we will try our best to bring those involved in such [criminal] activities to book," he added.

Asked whether he had any plan to increase the number of the force on the ground, the army chief said, "All the personnel we have in the military have already been deployed and they are working."

Responding to another question, he said, "Politicians asked me to take the responsibility [of people's safety]."

"Somebody has to take it [responsibility]. There was no one to take it and thus I shouldered the responsibility. I have to take the responsibility if there is any failure here. I have tried my best and normalcy will return within a very short time," he said.

"But we have a lot to do. Give me some more time."