

## PBI to probe the killing of Abu Sayed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinaipur*

The murder case of Abu Sayed, a student of Begum Rokeya University, who was killed in police firing during the anti-discrimination student movement in Rangpur, has been transferred to the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI).

The case has been moved from Rangpur city's Tajhat Police Station to the PBI following an order from the Police Headquarters yesterday, confirmed ABM Zakir Hossain, superintendent of police at Rangpur PBI.

In the afternoon of July 16, Sayed, 23, was shot and killed during the quota reform protest near his university.

Video footage shows police shooting Sayed, who posed no physical threat to the law enforcers. He died soon afterwards.

But contradicting what is evident, the First Information Report (FIR) filed by police said Sayed was not a victim of police firing.



As student volunteers repaint the city, this particular wall mural in Dhaka University's TSC read, "Amader notun secular Bangladesh [Our new secular Bangladesh]". The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Troops to return to barracks once police resume normal duty Says army chief

STAR REPORT

Soldiers will return to barracks once the police resume full-scale operation across the country, Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman said yesterday.

He said this during a press briefing after inspecting the activities of the army's temporary camp at Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna city around 4:00pm.

Prior to this, he exchanged views with the top government officials of the division and district.

The army chief said that things have improved in terms of law and order in the country and that things will soon return to normal.

"If the situation continues to improve, all regular forces will carry out their counter-terrorism operations," he said, reports UNB.

Regarding attacks on minorities, the army chief said around 30 instances of attacks on minority communities have been committed in 20 districts to date.

The majority of these crimes, he continued, were politically motivated and involved the looting and arson of temples.

In this context, he urged the political parties to put the interests of the people before violence.



## Food inflation tops 14pc for first time

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face of mass protests led by students.

Elevated consumer prices have a long life in Bangladesh. Since March 2023, the overall inflation has stayed over 9 percent.

While economists blamed the price surge in July on the supply chain breakdown, they also raised questions over the statistical agency's past shoddy data that kept inflation relatively subdued. The actual data could be much higher. The economists have now urged the government to reveal the real inflation data as Hasina's rule ended.

The price spike came largely from food inflation in both urban and rural

markets. Non-food inflation also increased, albeit at a much slower pace than food inflation.

Hussain said the increased uncertainty due to political turmoil may have created a "precautionary demand" for essential items.

"It is natural for people to try to stock up when they are not sure about the functioning of markets and the availability of goods even if markets are open. This may have created additional pressure on prices."

The "fearless disclosure of the truth" may be another reason for higher inflation, he said. "The BBS may have felt no inhibition in releasing the numbers without massaging under

the changed political circumstances."

Prof Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling, concurred with Hussain and accused Hasina's government of manipulating inflation data.

"The statistical agency didn't publish the real data and showed the 'reduced value' to give political advantages to the government," Raihan said. "We raised the issue with the government as well."

He also pointed to the supply chain disruption since mid-July when student protests turned deadly. As a result, the low- and fixed-income people were the first to take a hit from a sudden price spike.

## Bangladesh experiencing

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"Because you ordered me to do this, I take your order," Yunus said he told them.

Several top allies of Hasina, whose iron-fisted tenure ended with her abrupt resignation and flight to neighbouring India a week ago, subsequently stepped down.

Among them were the former chief justice of the Supreme Court and the central bank governor.

They had been issued ultimatums to quit their posts by students but Yunus said their resignations had been conducted legally.

"They want to have a new court," he said of the students. "So they went there and asked the chief justice to resign and put their pressure on him."

"I'm sure they will find the legal way to justify all of this, because legally... all the steps were followed," he said.

Hasina, 76, fled by helicopter as protesters flooded Dhaka's streets in a dramatic end to her long rule.

Her government was accused of widespread human rights abuses, including the extrajudicial killing of thousands of her political opponents. "Finally, at this moment, the monster is gone," Yunus said.

However, despite the groundswell of public goodwill towards him, Yunus warned that his interim government faced difficult decisions ahead.

"The moment you start making decisions, some people will like your decisions, and some people

will not like your decisions," he said. "Obviously, that's the way it works."

Yunus made the comments during an off-the-record media briefing on Sunday night at a state building being used as a temporary seat of government.

His office agreed to their publication on Monday evening.

Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for his pioneering work in microfinance, credited with helping millions of Bangladeshis out of grinding poverty.

He took office as chief adviser to a caretaker administration made up of all civilians except a retired brigadier-general.

He said last week that he wanted to hold elections "within a few months".

## Firearms looted from at least 22 DMP stations

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According to sources, at least 15,000 bullets were plundered from a police station in Uttara alone.

Another DMP official said a similar incident occurred at Badda Police Station.

According to various police sources, many police stations outside the capital suffered the same fate.

**MORE COPS JOIN WORK**

The Police Headquarters yesterday said that 628 of the 639 police stations across the country were operational.

In a press release, it also said that 108 of 110 police stations in metropolitan areas resumed work, while 520 of 529 police stations in districts began functioning again.

However, the presence of traffic police was still thin, while many cops remained absent from their stations and other units despite their strike being called off.

At some 11 stations, necessary logistics, furniture, and equipment were destroyed, and those couldn't start operations, the PHQ said, adding that it would take two to three days for those to become functional.

Police personnel refrained from discharging their duties following attacks on them after the violence centring the anti-discrimination student protests, which led to Sheikh Hasina's ouster on August 5.

Many cops were killed during the attacks, while video evidence shows them shooting unarmed people at point-blank range.

Mohammad Mohsin, officer-in-charge of the capital's Tejgaon Police Station, said that while most of their officers joined the station, only those on duty wore their uniforms.

Till 5:30pm yesterday, 21 general diaries filed by service seekers were registered with the police station, but no case was filed.

He also said they started patrolling the main roads on a limited scale yesterday for the first time since August 5.

Visiting Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station, this correspondent found many officers in plainclothes.

The station's OC ABM Moshir Rahman said all their officials joined on Sunday but many are too traumatised and afraid to wear the uniform.

Meanwhile, a limited number of traffic police, along with student volunteers, Ansar members, and firefighters, were seen controlling traffic in the capital and elsewhere.

In Narayanganj, five out of the seven police stations began operations, with 70 percent of their officers joining the workplace.

Amir Khasru, an additional superintendent of police in

Narayanganj, said traffic police began duties on a limited scale after 2:00pm.

In Sylhet, cops returned to duty as law and order was restored. Some traffic police personnel returned to the streets and were being assisted by scouts and Bangladesh National Cadet Corps members.

In Dinajpur, only six out of 20 traffic police were on duty on different roads yesterday, while all the stations in the district began operations.

In Munshiganj, five out of seven police stations resumed operations.

A traffic sergeant said people appreciated seeing them back on the roads.

Our correspondents in Bogura, Gazipur, Patuakhali, Kustia, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Brahmanbaria, Pirojpur, and Jhalakathi also reported that police stations in those districts have resumed operations, while traffic policemen were also seen discharging duties along with the student volunteers.

Home Affairs Adviser Brig Gen (retired) Sakhawat Hossain yesterday told reporters that people can inform him in case the police did not record any complaints or GD, or if they found any irregularities.

(Our district correspondents contributed to this report.)

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regular contact with the international organisations and ensure Bangladesh's participation in the activities of those organisations.

Briefing reporters at the Secretariat after the meeting, Mohammed Mezbah Uddin Chowdhury, senior secretary at the public administration ministry, said the chief adviser instructed that prompt decisions should be made regarding the purchase of fertiliser, electricity, fuel and other related items so that the food supply chain remains smooth and uninterrupted.

Prof Yunus also instructed all officials to act responsibly while making decisions, said Mezbah.

He said the chief adviser directed the secretaries to prepare within seven days a priority list on the work to be done to bring normalcy to the country fast.

The secretaries were also instructed not to bring up all matters, except for those very important, before the chief adviser for the time being, Mezbah said.

## Interim govt's major task is to sue Hasina

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organised by the Forum for Bangladesh Studies.

He said if the present government cannot file the case due to an impaired judicial system, it can go to the United Nations or International Criminal Court (ICC).

"The case can be referred to the ICC, if a country is unwilling or unable to conduct proper proceedings."

Different bodies, including civil society, can go to the ICC directly to lodge the case over crimes against humanity, said Prof Riaz.

He demanded that three former ministers — Obaidul Quader, Asaduzzaman Khan, and Anisul Huq — be held accountable for "grossly violating human rights by issuing shoot-on-sight orders against unarmed people".

Prof Riaz also sought the dissolution of the current National Human Rights Commission and the formation of a new one, comprising those who have fought for human rights over the last 15 years.

"This new commission should record the testimonies of those who have been rescued from 'Aynaghor' and victims of enforced disappearances over the last 15 years... It is essential to keep documents of these incidents and identify those responsible."

He asserted that the previous government deliberately and systematically broke down the administrative structure and called for the formation of an independent

commission to hold those responsible accountable.

Another main task of the interim government, he said, is to hold a free and fair election as soon as possible to hand over power to public representatives.

"The current government needs to clarify its goals and vision to the public," he said, calling upon political parties to understand the people's aspirations and act accordingly.

Prof Riaz urged the media to publish reports that reflect the true aspirations of the masses and asked the students and the ordinary people to be careful about any actions that go against the aspirations.

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman demanded an investigation under the United Nations into the killings during the recent violence.

"The primary goal of the government is to fulfill the mandate of the people by establishing people's power, transparency, and accountability, and the right to vote," he said, calling upon all to refrain from taking revenge.

Apart from holding elections, the government must ensure freedom of opinion and expression, the freedom to participate in any parties, press freedom, the right to access information, and the right to privacy, he added.

He demanded repeal of all draconian laws and the overhaul of institutions that have been politicised.

Iftekharuzzaman emphasised that

people do not want "Aynaghor" or "Hawa Bhaban".

"Political parties and their affiliated bodies must prepare a code of conduct, the government employees' code of conduct has to be updated, the provision for allowing black money to be legalised must go, and the corrupt must be held accountable," he said.

He spoke for keeping educational and service-providing institutions free from political influence.

Mirza MH Hasan, a senior research fellow at the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development at BRAC University, said they want a government where checks and balances are maintained between the state and society.

He also asked for the reintroduction of the rules and regulations enacted during 2007-08, which were repealed by the former government.

He spoke for a broader approach to democracy, including a bicameral parliament, and a provision in the constitution for establishing a minimum wage for workers.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), called for reforms in government institutions and law enforcement agencies.

He urged political parties to pursue a political settlement involving members of civil society.

Journalist Monir Haider conducted the webinar where Faiz Ahmed Taiyeb, a sustainable development and public policy critic, presented the keynote paper.

## Interim govt to get necessary time

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and superintendents of police, and reforms to the Election Commission.

"We have received assurance from the chief adviser that neither the Awami League nor its people will be given power."

The convener of a faction of Gono Odhikar Parishad, Reza Kibria, said, "The interim government will work for as long as it takes to stabilise the situation in the country and create an environment conducive to polls."

Nurul Haque Nur, who led another faction of the Gono Odhikar Parishad, said they placed a 14-point demand before the chief adviser. "We have urged the swift implementation of reforms and preparation of a roadmap for national elections."

**ON AUGUST 15**

AB Party Convener AFM Solaiman Chowdhury, who led a three-member team at the meeting, said observing National Day of Mourning goes against the spirit of the proclamation of independence and the July uprising.

"Actually, we had only one thing on the agenda at today's meeting — whether August 15 should be

observed as national mourning day," party's Joint Member-secretary Asaduzzaman Fuaad told The Daily Star.

"This administration is an extraordinary government that took over following the mass uprising and ouster of a dictatorial regime. Therefore, the mood and feelings of the student and young protesters on the streets should be respected," Fuaad said he had told the chief adviser.

The party argued that no public holiday is observed for Abraham Lincoln or the founding fathers of the US or Winston Churchill in Britain.

Reza Kibria said, "There is no reason to have a holiday on August 15. We know that the Awami League tried to make August a month of mourning for us, but we liberated the country and regained independence on August 5. Therefore, it is necessary to cancel the public holiday."

"Today's discussion mainly focused on observing August 15. There is no justification for this day. Dr Yunus will make the final decision on whether this day will be observed." Nur said, "We have requested a

review of various important decisions made by the government..."

"All political parties that participated in today's meetings, including ours, have said that August is a month of national revolution. We want to observe this month as a month of revolution. It is not a month of mourning. It is a month of happiness and peace."

The Awami League has been observing the day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination as National Day of Mourning. In 2001, the BNP-led four-party coalition government cancelled the holiday.

However, the High Court later ruled that the cancellation of the holiday was invalid.

This was the first day of meetings between the chief adviser and different political parties since Yunus led interim government took office on August 8 following the fall of Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government on August 5.

Ganatantra Mancha and Islami Andolan also had meetings with the chief adviser yesterday, but this paper could not reach them for comments.