



Residents of nearby villages join hands to rebuild the embankment along the Bhadra river in Khulna, which was breached by strong currents on Thursday morning, flooding villages in Deluti union under Paikgasa upazila. Top right, a couple, clutching their possessions in a floating container, navigates the chest-deep floodwater in search of a safer place. The photo was taken at Ali Nagar Bus Stand area in Fazilpur, Feni. Bottom right, passengers are having to walk to their destinations because of standstill traffic on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway for the third consecutive day as the flood situation did not improve in Feni. This photo was also taken at Ali Nagar Bus Stand area.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN, RAJIB RAIHAN

Hasina, 7 journos sued for murder

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In another murder case filed at Uttara East Police Station. They were arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Wednesday.

An organisation of broadcast journalists has expressed concerns over their arrest.

The case accusing Hasina and the seven journalists was filed over the death of Nayeem Howlader, 17, an HSC student at Shanarpur Rowshan Ara Degree College. He was shot dead in Jatrabari during the anti-quota protests that culminated in an uprising. His father Kamrul Islam filed the case at Jatrabari Police Station on Thursday.

Multiple former ministers and MPs, mayors, police officers, Awami League leaders, Jubo League and Chhatra League members, as well as Rapid Action Battalion officials, 80-90 police officers and members assigned to the Wari Zone on the day of the incident, and 250-300 unidentified individuals, were also accused in the case.

Dozens of cases have so far been filed against Hasina, her party members and law enforcement officers over the killings during the protests.

Journalists have also been named in some of the cases, a feature of the previous Awami League government.

Asked why such cases are still occurring, Asif Nazrul, the law adviser to the interim government, said: "We cannot prevent a parent of a slain student from filing a case based on their judgment."

The previous government had institutionalised the practice of filing such broad cases, he said.

"Perhaps we are witnessing the aftermath now. However, we will ensure that no one is harassed without a proper investigation," the adviser added.

In the case filed at Jatrabari Police

Station, the father said some "reckless, corrupt, self-serving and overly enthusiastic officers" of the police, Rab and BGB indiscriminately opened fire on the protesting students and civilians on direct and indirect orders from Hasina and 14 Party Alliance leaders.

The accused, armed and intending to launch an armed assault on the peaceful protesters, recklessly fired shots at the innocent students, the plaintiff said.

This resulted in the deaths of over a thousand people including his son Nayeem, with countless others injured, according to the first information report.

The other accused include Hasina's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, daughter Saima Wazed Putul, currently serving as the South East Asian regional director for the World Health Organisation, Hasina's cousin and former MP Sheikh Helal Uddin, and his son and ex-lawmaker Sheikh Sarhan Naser Tonmoy.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader, leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Anisul Haque, Dipu Moni, Tajul Islam, Mohammad A Arafat, SM Rezaul Karim, Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, AFM Bahauddin Nasim, Hasan Mahmud, Shajahan Khan, Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, and Zunaid Ahmed Palak were accused too. The allies of Hasina who were named in the case include Anwar Hossain Manju, Hasanul Haq Inu and Rashed Khan Menon.

Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, former mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation, Atiqul Islam, former mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, former MP Haji Mohammad Salim, former BCL president Badiuzzaman Sohag, its former general secretaries Zakir

Hossain and Siddique Nazmul Alam, Jubo League Chairman Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash, General Secretary Mainul Hossain Khan Nikhil, former MP and actor Ferdous Ahmed, and Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee president Shahriar Kabir are also among the accused.

The police officers accused in the case include former IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, former DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman, former DB chief Harunor Rashid, DMP's Wari Division Deputy Commissioner (DC) Iqbal Hossain, former Special Branch chief Monirul Islam, former DMP joint commissioners Biplab Kumar Sarkar and SM Mehedi Hasan, and assistant commissioner of Lalbagh Zone Nazrul Islam.

BJC EXPRESSES CONCERN

The Broadcast Journalist Center (BJC) has expressed concern over the arrests of journalist couple Shakil and Farzana.

Television journalism was hampered and questioned due to repressive laws, authoritarian behaviour, and ownership patterns during the previous regime, BJC said in a statement yesterday.

The recent mass uprising of students and people has raised hopes of creating a field of independent journalism, the statement said.

But a series of events have revived old concerns about TV journalism recently, it said.

The BJC has urged all stakeholders, including the interim government, to play their role in ensuring the safety of journalists and a conducive working environment.

They demanded legal aid for Shakil and Rupa, and justice for another journalist couple, Sagar Sarwoar and Meherun Runi, who had been murdered in 2012.

said surveillance practices are not unique to Bangladesh as similar measures exist in almost all countries, including the United Kingdom.

However, the governments in other countries exercise their powers without invading citizens' privacy, and they gather information to fight terrorism and ensure security. But the surveillance tools were used in Bangladesh against those who were critical of the Awami League government.

"After Sheikh Hasina left the Gono Bhaban [on August 5], numerous CDs were recovered from its premises. I have obtained copies of them. The contents of those CDs are so damaging that, if made public, they could potentially destroy the careers of many politicians. So it is quite clear that Sheikh Hasina used this disturbing information to manipulate others, keeping it in her possession as a tool for blackmailing others and create a political narrative."

Golam Mortoza, editor of The Daily Star Bangla, demanded full transparency from the interim government regarding the information on Israeli technologies acquired by Bangladesh, including Pegasus, and the illegal activities involving their procurement.

"As citizens, we want to know from the government on whose orders and under what processes those purchases were made, and how the money was spent. We want to know whether the truth is what we know, or if there are truths beyond our knowledge," he said.

Millions cut off without food, power

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of Noakhali yesterday and there was a severe crisis of drinking water and food in eight upazilas.

Sobhan Miah, a 68-year-old farmer in Char Elahi village of Companiganj, said he had not drunk safe water in a week.

"The water is receding, but there is still two foot deep water in my house. There is no rice and the stove is submerged. We are starving," he said, requesting a correspondent of this newspaper to send some relief materials.

Many residents of the area could not go to a shelter because they did not have boats.

Muhammad Yusuf, his 58-year-old neighbour, said, "There are no means to go anywhere. We are forced to sit on the cot the whole time."

The water levels of the Khowai dropped below the danger level in Habiganj town, the Manu in Kulaura, the Gumti in

Debidwar, and the Halda in Fatikchhari.

Several rivers were still flowing above the danger mark in Cumilla, Sylhet, and Moulvibazar.

Officials said another bout of downpour is not likely in affected districts and the upstream regions of India today and the situation would improve in Feni, Cumilla, and Chattogram.

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday urged the government agencies, NGOs, student organisers, volunteers and expatriates to work in a coordinated manner to help the people in distress.

He made the call at a meeting with 44 NGOs at the state guest house Jamuna, said his Press Secretary Shaiful Alam.

After the meeting, BRAC Executive Director Asif Saleh said he told the chief adviser that post-flood management should be done through coordinated efforts, zone-wise activities, and relief

collection as per demand.

Representative of an NGO told Prof Yunus that Tk 1,000 crore may be needed for the post-flood management.

Officials in Chattogram said 2.7 lakh people were stranded in the district.

The authorities were scheduled to release water from the Kaptai dam in Rangamati today. Officials said it would have no effect on the floods.

RELIEF EFFORTS

Medical teams, army, navy, coast guard, fire fighters, border guards, and student organisers are working in Feni, Noakhali, Chattogram, Brahmanbaria, Cumilla, Habiganj, and Lakshimpur along with local administration.

According to the chief adviser's office, 769 medical teams are working in 11 districts.

[Nazrul Islam and Arun Bikash Dey from Chattogram contributed to this report].

Reshuffle of officials for ensuring reforms

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so that this does not happen again in the future."

He said a lot of work had been done on reforms in Bangladesh in the past – the framework of the three alliances in 1991, constitutional reforms proposed by Serajul Alam Khan in the early 80s, and by many civil society organisations in different times.

"What was absent then was a lack of goodwill. Now, I believe we can deliver some good work because we have a leader [Prof Muhammad Yunus]," he added.

Speaking of reforms in the judiciary, the law adviser said a popular opinion about judicial reform is that the lower courts should be reformed first. However, to get an independent judiciary, the higher courts must be reformed first, according to him.

"Ensuring an independent lower court is to ensure the higher court's full authority on it. The higher court will govern and control the lower court, and the government will not intervene here. What's the point of giving [the control of] lower courts to the higher court if the higher court functions as a subordinate to the government?"

"So, we have to reform the higher court," he said.

Asif said the interim government has been working to this end as there was "anarchy" in the appointment of higher court judges during both Awami League and BNP governments with "incompetent, corrupt and partisan" people.

Steps for higher court reform will include amending the recruitment act and policy, rationalising the chief justice's sole authority over the entire judiciary, reforming the general administration committee of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division and the High Court Division, establishing an independent and dedicated secretariat for the higher court, and putting an end to recruiting retired judges in any post, he said.

Asked if the spree of filing cases against top Awami League leaders and their arrests on various charges are ridiculous, as seen by many, Asif said

questions could be raised against these cases but those are not ridiculous.

"Many people have filed cases as they have lost their children during the July massacre. They filed the cases after losing their children, and if they think that the former prime minister was responsible for the murders, will the cases be controversial?"

He said filing a case against someone does not mean they are already punished.

"Even after taking the case into cognisance, there can be an investigation and the accused person can be out on bail. But things will not be like what they used to be during the Awami League regime, whose target was to keep people behind bars by filing cases without granting bail."

Asked whether the cases would hinder the judicial process, Asif said no one has the right to prevent a father who lost his children from filing a case.

He said the July mayhem not only saw people killed but thousands of others were hurt to different degrees, such as loss of eyesight.

"If the people file cases accusing Sheikh Hasina or her former ministers as instigators, we cannot prevent them from doing it."

"We are not encouraging anyone to file cases either. People are filing cases spontaneously. We will only ensure that justice is done," he added.

Commenting on the harassment of former arrested AL leaders, including former social welfare minister Dipu Moni, on the court premises, Asif said, "I felt bad about such incidents, especially about what happened with Dipu Moni. But isn't the recently ousted regime responsible for the situation that unfolded on the court premises?"

It is not proper to expect people to be humble after the anarchy the ousted regime had created in the name of justice and snatched the people's voting rights for the last 15 years, he added.

Speaking of the interim government's tenure and the next parliamentary election, he said the people of Bangladesh will decide how long the government will continue.

If the people want reform and the next election to be fair, then this government

should be given time, he said.

BNP, one of the country's biggest political parties, said it will wait as long as it takes, Asif said. "At this moment, we need to do the 'urgent things' first."

The law adviser also said the interim government is trying to learn from its mistakes.

"Many of us don't have the experience of running a government. If any person goes to work with little experience, s/he will make some mistakes. But one should consider whether I have the will to do something good, whether I am working hard and trying to learn from the mistakes," he said.

Asked if a "judicial coup" was going to take place as a counter-revolution, the adviser said, "Since it didn't happen, we don't know what the truth is. However, there was an apprehension that such a thing would happen."

About the student led movement, he said although six student coordinators are often referred to when it comes to the movement, many others played major roles.

He praised their maturity and sense of consciousness, urging them to be patient so that the revolution, which came in exchange for many people's supreme sacrifice, does not become futile.

Asked about their steps on repressive laws against the media, he said his stance on the issue is nothing different from that of the journalist community.

"I can tell you that the application of these laws will not be the same as before. We will review them very seriously. We will take the stakeholders' views and then see which sections could be scrapped and which are amendable. We will try to give a good news in a month," he added.

About the seven journalists accused in a murder case yesterday, Asif reiterated they cannot prevent a parent of a slain student from filing a case.

"The previous government had made an established culture to file such cases. Perhaps, we're seeing a continuation of it. However, we will look into the matter so that no one is harassed without proper investigation," he added.

Log on to thedailystar.net for the full interview

Release white paper

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and Freedom of Speech," brought together politicians, lawyers, human rights activists, journalists, and IT experts. The event was moderated by former BASIS president Fahim Mashroor.

The discussants said that Article 43 of the country's constitution guarantees every citizen's right to privacy. Despite this, the ordinary citizens' phones have frequently been tapped in recent years through telecom networks, supposedly under certain "unconstitutional provisions" of the Telecommunications Act.

This surveillance, carried out at the discretion of a select group of people without any regulatory oversight, has raised serious concerns. Alarming, the ousted government of Sheikh Hasina had acquired technologies that can hack smartphones and recording private calls, messages, photos, and videos without needing to access telecom networks.

The speakers termed such activities "illegal and a blatant violation of human rights".

Fahim said the interim government should publish a white paper detailing the surveillance activities conducted by the Hasina government.

He said the current advisory council of the interim government includes four human right activists who had been subjected to privacy breaches and harassment by the former authoritarian government. The advisers should understand the importance of this issue.

"We don't want the next political

no alternative.

"I don't believe that a few people will be able to make reforms. I believe that reforms should come through people's participation," he added.

Fakhrul then called upon the interim government for a roadmap for the election. "We believe those in the government are sincere and qualified people. But we want their work to be more visible."

"We want to see that the chief adviser will soon present to the people what he wants to do – give a roadmap on how he will organise elections very soon, how he will bring about the necessary

reforms and give relief to the people and move forward for elections."

Fakhrul stressed the need for dialogue and said, "So far, there has been no real agenda-based discussion between the political parties and this government. Opinions of the political parties should be taken."

Regarding the appointment of vice-chancellors to the universities, he said, "No vice-chancellor has been appointed to the universities so far although the previous vice-chancellors have resigned. We want to see people acceptable to all as vice-chancellors."