

PADMA BOAT CAPSIZE Bodies of 4 missing victims recovered

A CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The bodies of four victims, who went missing in Padma River after a boat capsized in Rajshahi's Paba upazila on Sunday night, have been recovered.

The deceased have been identified as Mohammad Razu, 22, Mohammad Ali, 38, Md Sabuj, 20, and Md Faruk, 19. All were residents of Char Majardiar village in Paba. They were all day labourers by profession.

Paba Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abu Saleh Mohammad Hasnat said locals recovered the bodies of Razu and Ali around 10:00pm on Monday at Khanpur village, approximately 2km off the accident site.

The remaining bodies were found at the same place early yesterday, the UNO added.

The namaz-e-janaza for the deceased were held, he said, adding that financial assistance would be provided to their families.

Shamim Hossain, a former member of Char Majardiar union parishad, said the incident occurred around 8:00pm on Sunday when a small engine-run boat carrying 15 labourers capsized in the Padma River.

Eleven of them managed to swim to safety, but four had gone missing.

Local authorities and Rajshahi Fire Service and Civil Defence were informed immediately after the accident. However, rescue operations were delayed due to a strong current in the river.

"We couldn't reach the spot on Sunday night because of the strong current. Rescue operations began at 6:00am on Sunday but had to be suspended by 11:00am due to inclement weather conditions," said AKM Murshed, assistant director of Rajshahi Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Take urgent steps to ensure security

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At least 27 pharmaceutical factories have been shut and vandals are attacking those, he said.

Bangladesh's image in the world improved when Nobel laureate Yunus took the charge of the interim government and the business community has full confidence in the administration, he said.

"But our reputation will suffer if the industries suffer in the absence of law and order. The international buyers are already scared."

"How will we deliver the orders if our factories are shut? Our safety and security has to be ensured for smooth production and delivery of goods."

At the meeting, the business representatives observed that police were yet to work like they used to.

The Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries at a press conference yesterday requested government support to calm the situation.

At the meeting with the chief adviser, business leaders said outsiders, including some groups living abroad, instigated the vandalism.

Prof Yunus urged the industry leaders to undertake labour reforms to win more orders from global brands.

"We have a major opportunity to make vital reforms. We need to upgrade our labour laws to ILO standards," he said.

After the meeting, AK Azad, former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), said pharmaceuticals, leather product makers, and even retail shops were not immune to looting.

"If our foreign buyers orders elsewhere, it will be difficult to bring the business back," said Azad.

ICCB Vice President Naser Ezaz Bijoy urged the government to be firm in ensuring law and order.

Former FBCCI president Mir Nasir Hossain said, "The readymade garment sector is bringing around 85 percent of our export earnings. This sector has been impacted over the last one month."

"We have requested the chief adviser to use his global fame to request the international community to keep faith in us," he told The Daily Star.

Joint drives, involving army personnel, should be frequent so that vested groups cannot damage the country's reputation, he added.

Khandoker Rafiqul Islam, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), and Tapan Chowdhury, managing director of Square Pharmaceuticals, also attended the meeting.

In Ashulia, 86 factories in the Dhaka Export Processing Zone operated smoothly, said Anwar Parvez, executive director (public relations) of Bangladesh Exports Processing Zones Authority.

Mohammad Sarwar Alam, superintendent of police of Industrial Police-1 in Ashulia, said workers demonstrated in front of some factories in the morning but they did not block roads.



Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus talks to editors of newspapers during a meeting at the state guesthouse Jamuna yesterday. PHOTO: PID

541 killed in nationwide violence in August Says HRSS report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political revenge, attacks on police stations, and assault on minority communities were seen in August, and all these point to a society split across the fault lines, said Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) in a report released yesterday.

The minority communities, especially the Hindus and Ahmadiyyas, have been particularly harmed in the aftermath of the protests. Attacks on their homes and

religious establishments spread extensively. This violence followed the indiscriminate killing of students and protesters in the first five days of August.

The death toll from the entire month of August is 541, said the organisation. It collated the statistics from 12 national newspapers.

After August 7, a total of 22 individuals were killed in political violence, and 537 were injured.

Out of 49 incidents of political

violence, 23 happened because of the BNP's infighting, 21 were related to clashes between the BNP and Awami League, four were incidents of AL infighting, and one was related to clash between the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

Among the 22 dead, 12 were from the BNP and 10 from the AL, said the report.

Two journalists were killed in August and 61 were injured, claimed HRSS.

Journalist Md Atikur Rahman was

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Call for national unity, reforms

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over time," said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, emerging from the meeting at the state guesthouse Jamuna.

"We want a national unity to be established in Bangladesh. It was part of our discussion," he said.

He said the editors expressed their expectation of major reforms, like amending the constitution and strengthening the local government.

"We want reforms to the autonomous bodies, like the Anti-Corruption Commission, Human Rights Commission, and the Election Commission, to make them truly people-oriented institutions, especially the Election Commission, so that all future elections truly reflect the thoughts of the voters. We want an Anti-Corruption Commission that would work independently," Mahfuz said.

The editors emphasised that the state-run media outlets, including BTV, BSS, and Bangladesh Betar, should be made autonomous so that those can perform professionally.

According to the editors, Yunus said that he believes in independent journalism, and made a special appeal so that the media, through their work, help create a national consensus.

"I realised that he truly wants a vibrant media. He genuinely believes in press freedom. If we've ever had a media-friendly head of government, we have one now," Mahfuz said.

Editors at the meeting said all allegations against the media should be referred to the press council first.

They also urged activities regarding four proposed laws, which they believe would curb citizens' rights, be stopped.

Mahfuz mentioned that Yunus asked the editors how long the interim government should stay. Many expressed their opinions on this matter, but the main gist was that it would depend on the government's

agenda, he said.

He noted that Yunus wants the media to discuss these issues in detail and provide him with an idea of what the nation wants.

"Yunus said he does not have his own view on the tenure of his government; rather, he wants to know the people's opinion on it."

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam, at a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy, said Yunus wanted to hear from the editors what would be a "reasonable" tenure of the interim government.

An editor said it should be between two and three years. Another said it should be two years. Most editors, however, said the tenure of the interim government should be determined by the time needed to carry out vital reforms, Shafiqul said.

The Editor's Council in a press release issued later said most of the editors at the meeting were members of the council. When Yunus asked about their opinions on the interim government's tenure, most did not mention any time.

Some had expressed their personal opinions, it said.

"Most of the editors present at the meeting did not say anything about the tenure of the government. They urged for quick restoration of law and order, ensuring security of the people and factories, and presenting the government's agenda or roadmap for reforms to the nation."

The chief adviser's press wing also issued a clarification stating, "During the meeting with Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus, several editors on Tuesday suggested that the tenure of the interim government could be two to three years. Most editors, however, said the tenure of the interim government should be determined by the time needed to carry out vital reforms."

During his press briefing earlier, Press Secretary Shafiqul said Yunus and the editors were in favour of

having a national unity to consolidate the reforms.

He said the editors made different suggestions, like amending or rewriting the constitution, setting up of a constitution commission, and a media commission.

Ways to make the police force effective and strong; a police commission; reforms to the Election Commission; and changes of the election commissioners were discussed.

There was also a suggestion to make the cabinet more proactive, he said.

"This is a great opportunity for Bangladesh, for all of us to repair the state and to take Bangladesh to a new level," Shafiqul quoted Yunus as saying.

Deputy Press Secretary Azad Majumder said the discussion was recorded and that each adviser would listen to the opinions of the editors.

The one-and-a-half hour meeting that began around 11:00am was attended by Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo; Taslima Hossain, editor of Ittefaq; Nurul Kabir, editor of New Age; Shamsul Huq Zahid, editor of The Financial Express; Altamash Kabir, editor of Sangbad; Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor and publisher of Bonik Barta; Mahbub Morshed, managing director of BSS; Zafar Sobhan, editor of Dhaka Tribune; Mostafa Mamun, editor of Desh Rupantor; Mostaliz Shafi, editor of Pratidin Bangladesh; Inam Ahmed, editor of The Business Standard; Hasan Hafiz, editor of Kaler Kantha; AMM Bahauddin, editor of Inquilab; and Abul Momen, editor of Amader Shomoy.

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During the visit, the US delegations are expected to call on Yunus, Hossain and Salehuddin Ahmed, the finance adviser to the interim government, among others.

"In a changed political context, the US-Bangladesh relations may be warm," a diplomatic source told the correspondent.

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Yunus to fly for NY on Sept 22

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus is set to depart for New York on September 22 for a brief visit to attend the 79th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain said yesterday.

"He will stay there only for five days," he told reporters at the foreign ministry in the afternoon.

When asked about chief adviser's potential bilateral meetings during the trip, Touhid said those would be arranged once he would be in New York.

"Some discussions are ongoing, and there will be meetings, but I can't specify at this point," he said.

On Monday, Touhid said the chief adviser would lead a small delegation to the UNGA in New York.

Only people with direct responsibilities at the UNGA will accompany the chief adviser, he said.

During the visit, the foreign adviser said, the chief adviser is also expected to attend a reception marking the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's relations with the United Nations.

A triumph spurred by belief

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they had lost to 12 times out of 13 previous encounters in Tests.

In both matches, Shanto thinks it was the players' indomitable belief that got them through tough situations.

"Belief is very important. Every single player believed that we can come back," Shanto said at the post-match press conference.

Yesterday, chasing a target of 185 on the fifth day of the match, Bangladesh's win hardly looked in doubt.

But victory, let alone a comfortable one, looked out of the picture on Day 3 when they were six down for just 26 runs, replying to Pakistan's first innings score of 274.

And then, Miraz and Shakib spun a web over the Pakistani batters, claiming four and three wickets respectively to bundle out Pakistan for 146, setting up a 30-run target which the openers chased down without breaking a sweat.

In both matches, Bangladesh showed they have the ability to deal with the ebbs and flows of a Test match as players never looked short of self-belief even when the situation was not in their favour.

Shanto had spoken of this belief in the team before the series began and his side backed up his words with incredible performances.

"Before we start the series, I said in a press conference that records can be broken. It was because we knew how well the players had prepared themselves. This was very important for us and we are very happy."

2 US teams set to visit

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towards the latter part of the AI's 15-year rule.

In December 2021, the US imposed hard sanctions on RAB over allegations of extrajudicial killings. In 2023, the US announced a visa policy for Bangladesh ahead of the general elections.

One of the delegations will be led by Donald Lu, the US assistant secretary of state for the bureau of south and central Asian affairs. Lu would be calling into Dhaka from India.

Another delegation will include Brent Neiman, the deputy under-secretary for international finance at the US Department of the Treasury, and Lindsey W Ford, the deputy assistant secretary of defence for South and Southeast Asia.

Officials from the USAID will also be included in the delegation.

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