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## SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

# Transfer probe from Rab to a high-powered taskforce: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court expressed grave concern over the Rapid Action Battalion's failure to resolve the murder case of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, which has remained unresolved for 12 years.

"The prolonged investigation delay is both unfortunate and shocking, affecting not only their family but the nation as a whole," remarked the bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Muhammad Mahbub UI Islam during a recent hearing.

In response to a petition, the court mandated the home ministry to transfer the case from Rab to a high-powered taskforce comprising experienced personnel from various agencies.

This task force is to complete the investigation and submit a report to the HC within six months.

The court set April 6, 2025, for further hearings on the matter. This directive followed a petition filed by the government on September 29, seeking to modify a previous HC order from April 18, 2012, which had assigned the case to RAB from the police's detective branch.

Since then, Rab has failed to conclude the investigation, requesting extensions from the trial court 113 times.

During the hearing, Additional Attorney General Aneek R Haque informed the bench that Rab lacks the necessary experience and expertise to investigate criminal cases, as it functions primarily as an operational unit.

He suggested that the pressure from the "undemocratic" government led by Sheikh Hasina hindered RAB's ability to conduct a thorough investigation.

The task force may include representatives from the Police Bureau of Investigation and the Criminal Investigation Department, said Mohammad Shishir Manir, the lawyer for the complainant in the case.

Sagar Sarowar, the news editor of private TV station Maasranga, and his wife, Meherun Runi, a senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in their rented flat in West Rajabazar on February 11, 2012, while their five-year-old son, Mahir Sarowar Megh, was at home.

Runi's brother, Nawsher Alam Roman, filed a murder case with the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station without naming any suspects. After initial investigations by police and detectives, RAB took over the case on April 18, 2012.

On September 9 this year, a Dhaka court instructed Rab to submit the probe report by October 15, marking yet another extension in a long line of delays. Previous court sessions have shown dissatisfaction with Rab's handling of the investigation and its failure to identify the murder's motive or apprehend the perpetrators.

Nawsher has voiced frustration over Rab's investigative methods, saying they have subjected him and his nephew to mental distress.

He appealed to journalists for any documents that could help shed light on the case.



Dipty Rani, a nurse from the National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital, visits her son who is admitted at the DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital after contracting dengue. While there, she helps the on-duty doctor as he is examining her son. She even helped other patients with their tests. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# 44 deaths in mob violence in 2 months

Says MSF report; 506 cases filed against AL members in Aug-Sep

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 506 cases have been filed against Awami League leaders, activists, government officials, and ministers in the two months following the fall of the AL-led government on August 5, according to a report by rights organisation Manabadhikar Shongskriti Foundation.

Of these, more than 200 cases were filed against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The 506 cases name at least 45,547 individuals, with a further 1,98,790 unnamed accused, according to the MSF report, signed by the organisation's founder, Sultana Kamal.

In September alone, at least 238 cases were filed against Awami League members, 111 of which were against Hasina. So far, 90 people have been arrested in connection with these cases.

The report, based on news from

18 media outlets and verified by rights activists, also highlighted a sharp rise in political violence, with at least 71 incidents in the past two months, including 48 in September.

- » 200+ cases against Hasina
- » 5 killed in political violence in September
- » 53 incidents of mob lynching
- » 12 shrine attack incidents
- » At least 6 extrajudicial killings in September

In September, five people were killed and 619 injured in political violence. Of the 48 incidents, 30 involved internal BNP conflicts, 13 were clashes between the BNP and Awami League, three were internal

Awami League disputes, one involved BNP-Jamaat, and another featured confrontations between the Awami League, BNP, and Jamaat.

Among those killed, four were BNP members, and one was a trolley driver. Additionally, four Awami League members were beaten to death by unidentified assailants.

The report also noted an alarming increase in mob attacks, with 53 incidents over the last two months, including 33 in September. These attacks have led to the deaths of at least 44 people.

"The rise in mob lynching has raised serious concerns, shaking the public's sense of security," said the MSF, adding that mob violence resulting in death is a blatant criminal offence and must be addressed by law enforcement.

MSF criticised law enforcement agencies for failing to fully commit to taking legal action against those

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## ENSURING WOMEN'S SAFETY

# Govt to form response cells in 64 districts

Adviser Sharmeen Murshid tells event marking Girl Child Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an effort to address abuse and discrimination against women and children, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs will establish rapid response cells across all 64 districts of Bangladesh, according to Sharmeen S Murshid, adviser to the ministry.

Speaking as the chief guest at an event held at Bangladesh Shishu Academy on National Girl Child Day yesterday, Murshid announced this initiative, aimed at creating a safer environment for girls and women nationwide.

The event was jointly organised by the ministry and the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum.

"These cells will include government officials, public representatives, and children, and are designed to provide a swift and coordinated response to any form of abuse or violence, ensuring accountability," Murshid said.

She also emphasised the government's

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## Freeze bank accounts of Joy, Putul, Bobby: BFIU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit yesterday directed banks to freeze all accounts belonging to Sheikh Hasina's children Sajeeb Wazed Joy and Saima Wazed Putul, and Sheikh Rehana's son Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby.

BFIU also asked banks to freeze accounts belonging to Nasrul Hamid, former state minister for power, and any accounts linked to the Centre for Research and Information (CRI) and the CRI's "Young Bangla" project. The BFIU instructed banks to block the accounts for 30 days in the first phase.

After the fall of the Awami League government, the BFIU has frozen the accounts belonging to more than 100 politically exposed persons, including ministers, state ministers, member of parliament, businessmen, government officials and police officials.



It's all fun and games until something goes wrong. As these children climb to the apex of the bridge at Crescent Lake in Chandrima Uddyan, a slight misstep could lead to a dangerous fall. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# India returns 20,000 Bangladeshi passports

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Indian High Commission in Bangladesh has returned nearly 20,000 passports of Bangladeshi visa applicants due to protests and security concerns, according to reports from Indian media.

A diplomatic source at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka said, "The passports were returned to the applicants in the last one and a half months because we had to run the visa section with a very small number of staff."

The source clarified that the inability to process visas was not a policy decision but rather a result of the majority of visa officials not attending the office because of safety issues.

Emergency cases, such as medical patients requiring urgent attention, student visas for those joining courses in India, and double-entry visas for individuals needing to apply for a third-country visa, are still being processed.

Following the protests that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government on August 5, Indian visa application centres in Bangladesh have largely remained shut.

Frustrated applicants have sent multiple emails to the High Commission, with some threatening vandalism. Staff at the Indian visa application centres have faced heckling, and protests have

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