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## Pressure piles on president to step down

Students demonstrate in front of Bangabhaban, Central Shaheed Minar, elsewhere in the country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The walls seemed to be closing in on President Mohammed Shahabuddin as calls for his resignation grew louder yesterday.

As more and more people joined demonstrations for his resignation, the government yesterday called him out on his "lies" about Sheikh Hasina's resignation as prime minister.

It all began after Manab Zamin on Sunday published an exclusive interview of him saying that he only heard that Hasina had resigned, but there was no evidence of her resignation.

As several hundred protesters under the banners Raktim July 2024 and Shadhinota-Sharbobhoumotto Rokkha Committee attempted to break through the security barriers in front of the Bangabhaban around 8:30 o'clock last night, police detonated stun grenades.

The protesters then chased the police away.

Five people, including two journalists, suffered minor injuries, witnesses said. Police also hit the protesters with batons and used tear gas shells.

Army personnel were seen trying to calm the situation.

At around 11:30pm, Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam, two of the most influential organisers of the student movement against discrimination, arrived and requested the protesters to leave, promising that a change would come in two days.

By midnight, most of the protesters left.

Hasnat told the protesters that he would talk to political parties in the presence of the army chief, and by Thursday, choose someone who could be the president.

Sarjis said, "We will discuss and appoint a person to an important post like that of the president. If emotion wins over strategy, we as well as the country will get hurt in the long run."

Unless a rational decision is made by Thursday, "we will join you on the streets".

On Sunday, Manab Zamin's political magazine Janatar Chokh ran an interview of President Shahabuddin with its Chief Editor Matiur Rahman Chowdhury.

"I tried [to collect the resignation letter] many times but failed. Maybe she did not have the time," Shahabuddin said.

The following day, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul termed the president's remark a lie and that the president's comments were akin to misconduct and if he stuck to his guns, the government should reconsider his position.

According to section 57(a) of the constitution, the prime minister's office shall become vacant if he/she resigns from the office at any time by handing the resignation letter to the president.

Yesterday, Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Apurba Jahangir told a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy that the interim government agreed with Asif's statement.

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Protesters try to scale an army barricade during a demonstration near the Bangabhaban last night demanding the resignation of President Mohammed Shahabuddin.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Scrap '72 constitution, ban Chhatra League

Anti-Discrimination Student Movement gives govt this week to fulfil demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement has issued an ultimatum to the government to fulfil their five demands, including removal of President Mohammed Shahabuddin and the scrapping of the 1972 constitution, within this week.

Making the demands during a gathering at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, Hasnat Abdullah, a coordinator of the platform, said Chhatra League has to be banned and a "proclamation of the republic" must be made to rebuild a post-2024 Bangladesh in consultation with democratic and functioning political parties.

He said the authorities must abolish the 1972 constitution immediately and a new one has to be drafted that would reflect the spirit of the uprising.

Hasnat said the three national elections, held in 2014, 2018, and 2024, must be declared illegal.

He also demanded the confiscation of assets of those who served as members of parliament during these periods, and asked for legal measures to bar them

### OTHER DEMANDS

- Declaring last three national elections illegal
- Removal of President Shahabuddin
- 'Proclamation of Republic' based on spirit of uprising

from participating in future elections.

Hasnat said Chhatra League should be identified as a "terrorist organisation" and permanently banned. "If the government failed to meet our demands within this week, we would return to the streets with full force."

He said that the revolution would only be complete when all democratic political parties, be it BNP, Jamaat, right-wing, left-wing, or otherwise, are allowed

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## BB expands inflation battle with rate hike

The central bank raises repo rate further by 50 basis points to 10%

AM JAHID

The central bank raised the key policy rate by 50 basis points to 10 percent yesterday, making borrowing costlier for the 11th consecutive time to tame inflation as spiralling prices remain a headache for the interim government.

The overnight repurchase agreement (repo) rate has exceeded the inflation rate for the first time in many years in Bangladesh in one of the most significant steps taken since Ahsan H Mansur took over as governor in August.

This is the third repo rate hike after Mansur's appointment. Even before taking up the role of governor, Mansur emphasised that the policy rate must be increased to a double-digit figure to control inflationary pressure by effectively tightening the money flow.

As Bangladesh Bank has remained firm on its contractionary monetary policy, analysts say higher borrowing costs can help reduce inflation by cooling down demand in the economy.

Banks will face higher costs while borrowing from the central bank, a possible scenario that typically leads to higher interest rates on loans for businesses and consumers.

While the rate hike is necessary to reduce the overall money supply in the economy to rein in runaway consumer prices, businesses may delay or reduce investments, and consumers may cut back on spending. This can slow down economic growth in the short term.

Bangladesh has been hiking the policy rate since May 2022, stepping

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## Sonali Life rejoinder, our reply

Sonali Life Insurance has sent a rejoinder to our report headlined "Tk 353cr anomalies found at Sonali Life Insurance" published on October 8. Since the rejoinder deals with matters mostly unrelated to our story, we are publishing an abridged but unedited version of the points made in the rejoinder, followed by our response.

Points made in the rejoinder:

a). Mr. Mostafa Golam Quddus and his family played a pivotal role in establishing Sonali Life

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Multiple illegal establishments, including a fish landing centre, were built at the mouth of the Chaktai and Rajakhali canals after encroachers occupied the banks of the Karnaphuli. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## IMF slashes growth forecast to 4.5 percent

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

After the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund has now brought down Bangladesh's growth forecast for this year as political uncertainty, industrial unrest and floods weigh heavily on economic activities.

In its flagship World Economic Outlook, IMF slashed Bangladesh's growth projection by 2.1 percentage points to 4.5 percent, the lowest since fiscal 2019-20, when the global coronavirus pandemic hit. In fiscal 2019-20, the GDP growth was 3.4 percent.

Earlier in June, the IMF forecasted Bangladesh's GDP growth for this fiscal year to be 6.6 percent.

Last week, the World Bank slashed its growth forecast for the Bangladesh economy by 1.7 percentage points to 4 percent for fiscal 2024-25 due to "significant uncertainties following recent political turmoil" and "data unavailability".

The GDP growth could be as low as 3.2 percent and if the situation improves, 5.2 percent at best.

This came after the Asian Development Bank previously lowered its growth forecast for Bangladesh to 5.1 percent from 6.6 percent citing supply chain disruptions caused

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