

Jubo League activist shot, stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Jubo League activist was shot and stabbed to death in front of his residence in the Rooppur area of Pabna’s Ishwardi upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased, Khalequzzaman Manik, 36, of Rooppur Pakar Mor, had recently been released on bail in a murder case. He returned to his locality about a week ago.

Ishwardi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Shahidul Islam Shahid said the incident occurred around 7:00am.

“A group of attackers on motorbikes arrived in front of his home. They shot Manik and attacked him with sharp weapons after he collapsed on the road. He died on the spot.”

The assailants fled immediately, and police recovered the body on information.

The victim’s body has been sent to the Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police said Manik was an accused in the murder of Chhatra League activist Tafsir Ahmed Mona, who was killed on September 17, 2023, following a dispute over control of illegal sand businesses in the area. Manik was arrested in connection with the case but secured bail last week.

“Previous enmity might have led to the killing,” the OC said, adding that police are investigating the incident and working to apprehend the culprits.

Additional police have been deployed to maintain law and order, added the OC.



People walk to their destinations yesterday after students of Government Titumir College block the Mohakhali level crossing and nearby streets for several hours. The photo was taken in Chairmanbari area of Banani around 12:30pm.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

JULY UPRISING Cops told to drop names of innocent from cases

Says CA’s press secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police have been instructed to quickly go over the cases filed over the casualties in the July uprising to remove the names of those who were not involved, said Chief Adviser’s Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam.

He said this to journalists in response to a query during a regular press briefing yesterday at the Foreign Service Academy.

The CA’s press wing also addressed the government’s stance on the wholesale filing of cases in recent times.

Deputy Press Secretary Apurba Jahangir said anyone has the right to file a case. However, it has been repeatedly stated that the names of people against whom there is no evidence of wrongdoing should be dropped.

On September 10, the Police Headquarters issued a directive stating that individuals whose involvement in murder or other offenses is not found in preliminary investigations must be taken off the relevant cases.

Yesterday, responding to a question over the formation of the Media Reform Commission, press secretary Shafiqul said a broad-based panel has been selected for the commission with qualified members.

People suffer as students block road

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out a procession from the college campus and blocked the Mohakhali intersection, including the railway crossing, around 11:15am. They continued their protest until 4:00pm.

Because of the protest, there was bumper-to-bumper traffic from Mohakhali to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on both sides. Additionally, all trains to and from Dhaka were delayed due to the blockade.

The demonstrating students forcibly stopped the Upakul Express, coming from Noakhali, at the Mohakhali railway crossing around 12:15 pm.

Moreover, they hurled stones through its windows, injuring at least 15-20 passengers, including children and women inside. Approximately 25 windows were broken, according to railway officials.

Besides the Mohakhali intersection, the protesters also blocked other

major roads, including roads leading to Gulshan and Banani, and areas around the BRT headquarters. They allowed only ambulances and CNG-run autorickshaws carrying patients to get through.

With no transportation available, many people were forced to walk to their destinations, some carrying heavy luggage or assisting elderly relatives and children.

Zobaidah Ferdus said she was stuck on the highway near the Mohakhali intersection for nearly an hour on her way to see a doctor in Gulshan 2.

“How can students block such a busy intersection? They could have sent their demands to the government if they were logical. Why did we have to suffer for a group of students’ demands?” she questioned.

Another commuter, walking from the Army Stadium to Mohakhali with two of his family members, said, “We waited for over 30 minutes for the traffic to move then decided to walk. We heard that students blocked the

roads.”

“The government must take action against those who unnecessarily block highways and cause suffering to the masses.”

The traffic also came to a halt in Mirpur, with vehicles on Begum Rokeya Sarani stuck for hours, eyewitnesses said. They said that while both the Mohakhali flyover and the road below were closed to traffic, the elevated expressway remained operational.

Khairul Kabir, the divisional transport official (Dhaka Division) of Bangladesh Railway, told The Daily Star that railway operations resumed after over four hours at 4:10pm. However, all trains to and from Dhaka were delayed due to the blockade, he added.

Students of Titumir College have repeatedly staged road blockades in recent months, demanding the college be upgraded to a university and the formation of a Titumir University Commission.

13 big shots produced at ICT

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within the same time.

The prosecution informed the court they will place a formal extradition request to bring Sheikh Hasina back from India.

On October 17, the ICT issued an arrest warrant for Hasina in connection with her alleged role in crimes against humanity and genocide during the July uprising.

Those produced before the tribunal yesterday included former law minister Anisul Huq; ex-civil aviation and tourism minister Lt Col (ret’d) Faruk Khan; former state minister for posts, telecommunications and information technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak; ex-social welfare minister Dipu Moni; former shipping minister Shajahan Khan; former state minister of industries Kamal Ahmed Majumder; and former jute and textiles minister Golam Dastagir Gazi.

The other high-profile accused brought to the tribunal were Workers Party President and former civil aviation minister Rashed Khan Menon; Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President and former information minister Hasanul Haq Inu; former prime minister’s power, energy and mineral resources adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury; Hasina’s adviser and businessman Salman F Rahman; retired justice Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik; and former home secretary Jahangir Alam.

Awami League presidium member Abdur Razzaq was also supposed to be produced at court yesterday, but he was on remand in Tangail’s Mirzapur Police Station.

All of them were shown arrested in a case filed over crimes against humanity and genocide during the July uprising and are accused of having “superior responsibility” for the July-August massacre, “even though they had a duty to protect the citizens”.

At the same time, those directly involved in decision-making are being charged with having “individual responsibility” in the massacre.

The bench, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, said, “The

accused committed the offences of killing, genocide, and crimes against humanity by their active participation or by instigation. Accordingly, an order was given to issue arrest warrants against them.”

The ICT was established in 2009 by the Hasina-led government to prosecute suspects for the genocide committed in 1971 by the Pakistan army and their local collaborators during the Liberation War.

This tribunal yesterday convened to prosecute her and her government.

The accused were brought to the court premises at 9:45am amid tight security. The main gates were locked and nobody, including journalists and lawyers, were being allowed inside without vetting.

The dock was prepared with chairs and all were seated. Dipu Moni was given a chair outside the dock. None of the accused were in handcuffs or any other restrictive apparatus.

While waiting for the court proceedings to start, several of the accused men got up and went over to the edge of the dock to greet Dipu Moni, who had been in the Kashimpur Women’s Central Jail since her arrest on August 19, 2024.

Salman F Rahman, who had allegedly been arrested from Sadarghat with his long white beard shaved and hair dyed black, was seen to have reverted to his signature look.

Meanwhile, Faruk Khan leaned on a cane to walk, and when the court rose for the judges, Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury had to grip the wooden fence of the dock to stand up.

Inu waved at reporters when entering the premises, and Zunaid Ahmed Palak motioned to the journalists present to pray for him on his way out.

The accused were given time to speak to their lawyers and meet their families in private after the proceedings. They were also free to converse with each other in the dock.

Chief Prosecutor Mohammad Tajul Islam read out the details of the accusations against them to the court.

“The seeds of the July-

August massacre were sown long ago during her 15-year-old tenure. She has perpetrated many crimes across her tenure. Those present here did everything in their power to consolidate her position.”

Multiple “sham elections”, where the people’s right to vote was not respected, established a regime that perpetuated widespread, targeted persecution of the general public, and those produced at court were complicit in that, said Tajul, adding, “By destroying the electoral system, a fascist regime took shape.”

He said the regime was characterised by illegal and arbitrary arrests and detention, custodial torture and deaths, enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, judicial harassment, politicisation of institutions and non-existent freedom of expression.

“All dissenting voices were relegated to being called razakars as a tactic to divide and rule the nation.”

When the students against discriminations platform brought forth protests based on legitimate demands, they characterised these students as razakars to legitimise attacking and killing them, said the prosecution.

“Anisul Huq had termed the protesters ‘spirits of those against the Liberation War’. Manik had gone live on television and called them ‘children of razakars’, mentioned Tajul, adding that lethal weapons were used against the protesters.

“The government of Sheikh Hasina ordered the law enforcers to shoot at sight. The reaction of the law enforcers and the semi-military forces to the peaceful protesters had been unnecessary, disproportionate, extreme, unjust, brutal and widespread.

“The Rapid Action Battalion had been spotted attacking protesters from helicopters, while semi-military forces like the Border Guard Bangladesh used assault weapons to tackle protesters.”

The prosecution also said witnesses have seen members of Chhatra League, Jubo League and Awami League join forces with the law enforcers and attack the

protesters.

He mentioned that Zunaid Ahmed Palak had blacked out the internet to suppress information and hide the scale of the brutality.

“At least 1,500 people, including 200 children, were killed in attacks between July and August 5. The children include those living in the streets, underage workers and even those located in the safety of their homes.

“They not only killed the protesters but they’ve also been involved in heinous acts like setting dead bodies on fire in Ashulia, killing a student named Ashabul Yamin and then throwing his body off an armoured personnel carrier, shooting at close-range in cold blood and causing permanent loss of limbs and organs. All these will go down in history as significant instances of savage brutality.”

Tajul also mentioned that the Hasina government had killed many innocent people during the 2013 attack on Hafiz-e-Islam’s Shapla Square protests. “They had switched off the street lamps and attacked innocent protesters,” he said, adding, “They had also persecuted human rights organisation ‘Odhikar’ for trying to demand justice for the killings.”

The prosecution also mentioned the BDR mutiny and said the government had completely covered up the issue.

The bench, which included Justice Md Shofiqul Alam Mahmood and Judge M Mohitul Hoque Anam Chowdhury, then asked the prosecution if they wanted to separate the charges concerning the Shapla Chattar attacks from that of the July-August massacre. The prosecution said it will take “all of it into consideration”.

Briefing reporters after the hearing, Tajul said, “This day serves as an important lesson for anyone who aspires to become a fascist or autocrat in the future of this country. It has been demonstrated in this court that no one can remain in power for long by committing crimes against humanity. Those who suppress and oppress the people, or engage in mass killings, will eventually have to stand trial.”

Major steps taken towards

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system, law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary.

Additionally, the report highlighted concerns over corruption, irregularities, and money laundering.

“In its 100 days, the interim government has taken numerous timely and significant measures. Despite challenges in certain areas, progress is evident in the pursuit of a ‘new Bangladesh’,” said TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

He said commissions were formed for reforms to key sectors and there have been visible changes in the financial sector.

The initiative to hold the fallen government’s ministers, MPs, and allies accountable for corruption along with strategic steps to recover laundered money are significant achievements, he said.

In a press release, he said, “It was evident that the essential strategies and roadmaps had not been put together right away to meet the important responsibilities of state reform and infrastructure development, which are vital for realising the objectives of the new political settlement entrusted to the interim government.”

Iftekharuzzaman criticised the ad-hoc approach to administrative decision-making and exclusion of the private and educational sectors from the reform initiatives.

“Another key issue is the lack of initiatives to reform political parties and their internal politics in the context of the anti-discrimination movement,” he said.

“Moreover, the absence of the role of the army in ensuring peace and order in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, despite its exclusive authority, along with the

deliberate attacks and threats against some media outlets to silence them, raises serious concerns, TIB believes.”

The TIB also spoke about press freedom, the right to information, the local government system, education, health, and other critical sectors.

Regarding politics, the TIB said the government’s decision-making process regarding banning or withdrawing bans on political parties has been widely criticised, and the culture of appointing or cancelling appointments based on political affiliation continues.

It noted that the way appointments were being made failed to meet established standards and that transparency was absent.

The report said in some instances, false and baseless cases were being filed against individuals. There are allegations of indiscriminately naming individuals as accused in cases and accusing people in cases only to extort money from them for dropping their names.

Cases are also being filed against individuals due to personal enmity, political rivalry, and to harass people.

Allegations of cases being accepted under pressure without proper investigation and reports of individuals being arrested from different locations were mentioned in the report.

The TIB also mentioned the criticism and controversy regarding the appointments of judges and prosecutors to the International Crimes Tribunal. It said questions have been raised about their competence, experience, and political affiliations.

It said Awami League

leaders and activists were attacked in court; a Bangladesh Chhatra League female leader was assaulted in front of members of law enforcement agencies; and attacks were carried out on rival lawyers.

Regarding law and order, the TIB said there was a lack of effective measures to verify incidents, identify perpetrators, conduct investigations, and in taking action in cases of attacks on religious minorities, indigenous peoples, marginalised groups, and dissenting communities.

Questions were raised regarding the release of top criminals, the report said, adding that extrajudicial killings by different forces were still going on.

On the banking sector, it said no visible steps have been taken to form a banking sector reform commission.

On inflation, the TIB noted that although several initiatives have been taken to control prices of essentials and inflation, they, especially food inflation, remain significantly high.

Regarding press freedom and the right to information, it pointed out that targeted attacks, threats, and attempts to shut down media outlets pose significant risks to media freedom.

On local government, the TIB said the termination of city corporation mayors, UP chairmen, vice chairmen, and other elected members left local government at a standstill. It also mentioned forced resignations in the education and health sectors. The health sector also suffered because of partisan politics.

The TIB said the culture of establishing control and dominance persists in the BNP.

It said the Indian government and media outlets have failed to accept the fall of the authoritarian regime amid the uprising, which is embarrassing and shameful for India.

The study reported impatience among stakeholders, including political parties, in giving the government time for reforms.

No reforms within parties have been observed, which highlights a failure to embrace the core spirit of the anti-discrimination movement, it said, adding that the influence of religion-based politics is also growing.

The role of students in overthrowing the authoritarian government was crucial, but some of them lacked a firm stance and political tolerance.

About polls, Iftekharuzzaman said without creating a conducive legal and institutional environment with specific steps for reforms, holding elections hastily would not achieve the goals of the student-led movement.

Iftekharuzzaman, also chairman of the Reform Commission for the Anti-Corruption Commission, said questions were being raised about the time for elections and suggested the government that it answers those questions.

He said concrete reforms must be made following the recommendations of the reform commissions. Considering these, the government must clarify how much time is needed to prepare for elections.

The TIB said the government was enjoying international support.

Loan conditions of the World Bank, ADB, and IMF, and rising debt repayments were posing as additional financial challenges, it added.