

SALUTING THE BRAVEHEARTS

36 days of JULY

PHOTO EXHIBITION
DECEMBER 1-7, 2024
Time: 10:00 AM-8:00 PM
Venue: The Daily Star Centre

STORYTELLING WEEK
Time: 3:00 PM-4:30 PM

BLACKOUT CHRONICLES
How journalists, activists navigated the Blackout
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4

MARGINALISED VOICES OF JULY REVOLUTION
Stories of struggle, sacrifice and hope from workers
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

WRITE TO PROTEST
Writers and poets on their experience
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

Neutral platform needed

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through the media to ensure they are not sidelined."

Rabeya Jhumur, a journalism student, urged for the amplification of marginalised voices, such as homemakers and women from remote areas.

"When their rights are violated, no one fights for them. A neutral platform is essential to unite women and raise voices against injustice."

Wasima Farzana, an aspiring anthropologist, said women in politics face numerous challenges. "Public and political spaces remain unfamiliar and unsafe for women, and we must nurture the habit of occupying these spaces."

Feminist activist Trishia Nashtaran urged women to move forward with an assertive attitude and action plans.

"The political sphere remains extremely masculine and toxic. Women must understand gender politics, be politically educated, and know that their leadership matters."

Shehreen Aatur Khan, assistant professor at Jagannath University, stressed the need for quotas to address systemic inequities.

"Equality and equity are separate and that must be understood starting from the family to workplaces and the society at large. Quotas are essential to bring women forward into spaces

from which they've been excluded."

Naziba Basher, senior sub-editor at The Daily Star, underscored the media's role in shaping narratives. She criticised the sidelining of women during movements, recalling how many media platforms deliberately cropped out student protest organiser Nusrat Tabassum in the photograph of protest coordinators at the DB office.

"Media professionals in powerful positions must promote the inclusion of marginalised groups, including indigenous women, gender-diverse populations, and women from low-income backgrounds."

Indigenous activist Suchi highlighted systemic oppression and the media's tendency to objectify women. "Why belittle women to sell news?" she questioned.

She also mentioned that indigenous people are labeled as "backwards", but they have been made so by systemic oppression.

Suchi pointed to incidents of violence against indigenous women, which are often ignored or downplayed by local authorities.

The Daily Star journalist Saudia Afrin said schools must complement families in teaching equitable roles for men and women.

"This foundational learning is crucial for reshaping societal norms."



Shireen Huq, prominent women's rights activist and founding member of Naripokkho, addresses the third session – "Women, Life, Freedom" – of The Daily Star's storytelling week titled "36 Days of July: Saluting the Bravehearts" at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Naripokkho Founding Member Shireen Huq, who is also the chairperson of the newly-formed Women's Rights Commission, noted that women's growing anger toward injustices could be a catalyst for change.

"This rage is the first step toward reform.... Women must claim public

spaces to ensure their visibility."

Addressing common misconceptions about reserved spaces in public transports, she urged the authorities to clarify that general seating in public transport is for everyone, regardless of gender.

Speakers also stressed the importance of involving men in

women's stories in reshaping societal norms and called for social media movements to ensure positive and accurate information on women's contributions.

The dialogue was facilitated by Shaveena Anam, manager of New Content and Audience Research at The Daily Star.

Robbers hack bkash agent, rob 'Tk 10 lakh'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Robbers attacked a bKash agent with sharp weapons and snatched a bag full of money from him in Kaliakair upazila of Gazipur late Monday night.

The victim, Saiful Islam, later claimed that the bag contained Tk 10 lakh.

Saiful, a resident of Rangartek, offers mobile financial services at his shop in Shalipur Bazar.

He was returning home after closing his shop when he came under the attack on Shalipur Bazar road, Riyad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kaliakair Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Quoting witnesses, the OC said that a group of five to seven robbers attacked Saiful with sharp weapons and snatched the bag he was carrying.

Upon hearing his cries for help, locals rushed to the scene, but the robbers exploded three crude bombs to create panic and fled in a car.

Saiful was initially treated at Shalipur Modern Hospital and later transferred to Enam Medical College in Savar for advanced treatment, the OC said.

Saiful claimed that he was carrying Tk 10 lakh in that bag, the OC said, adding that legal action will be taken once a formal complaint is filed.

Tarique calls for

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caste, or religion, despite facing many challenges, Tarique said in a Facebook post yesterday.

"Since the fall of autocrat Sheikh Hasina, there has been an increase of inflammatory media commentary and political rhetoric against Bangladesh coming from certain Indian quarters. There is now an echo chamber filled with misinformation, fuelling persistent anti-Bangladesh sentiment."

Tarique said, "The latest attack on the Bangladeshi consulate in Agartala highlights the destabilising effects of disinformation, which only creates division and discord among neighbours."

Calling for international attention, he highlighted the importance of a stable Bangladesh for the region.

"International stakeholders must acknowledge that a destabilised Bangladesh, with near about 200 million people, is not in the interest of any country."

"It is crucial to objectively understand what led to Hasina's ouster, what has been happening in Bangladesh since she fled to India, and why it's imperative to forge people-to-people ties between Bangladesh and India, beyond any particular person or political party," Tarique said.

FDI data overstated

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The previous policy measures will have to be revisited in light of the new FDI data, said Mujeri, also a former chief economist of the BB.

"Now I can say that we took wrong policy measures based on false data," he said, adding that correct economic data and information are imperative now for restructuring the economy.

Proper methodology was not followed for calculating economic data, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"But we were able to understand the actual scenario of the economy despite the wrong economic data, like FDI data. Wrong data gives wrong signal and wrong signal led to wrong policy measures," said Khatun, also a director of the BB board.

There was no employment despite FDI growth, export growth and GDP growth so that there were doubts about the data.

"FDI was already low in Bangladesh but now it has decreased even more, which is very concerning. The corrected FDI data reflects that we are simply failing to attract foreign investors to the country," Khatun added.

Protests mount, Yunus moves for national unity

FROM PAGE 1

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi urged the interim government to seek assistance from the United Nations peacekeeping forces to guard the facility in Agartala.

"Indian law enforcers failed to provide security.... Officials and employees of the Bangladesh mission are feeling insecure," he said.

Certain extremist religious groups in Bangladesh, "instigated by India's BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]", are out to disrupt peace, he said, calling upon the interim government to control those extremists.

"We urge Modi [Indian prime minister] and Mamata [West Bengal chief minister] to take care of their own issues. Here in Bangladesh, all communities live in peace," he said, adding, "Bangladeshis were not

"We request the Indian government and people not to use hatred against Bangladesh as a tool in domestic politics, because it may harm the long-term friendship between the two countries."

hostile towards the Indian people."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, now in London, issued a statement saying, "It appears that the attack by members of an organisation called 'Hindu Sangharsh Samiti' on the premises of the Assistant High Commission was pre-planned."

The Vienna Convention had been violated, he added.

He expressed hope that the Indian people and government would respect the democratic aspirations of Bangladeshis and extradite the Awami League leaders staying there.

"We request the Indian government and people not to use hatred against Bangladesh as a tool in domestic politics, because it may harm the long-term friendship between the two countries."

The BNP and student organisations also demonstrated in Rangpur, Noakhali, Cumilla, Rajshahi, Chattogram, Barishal, Feni, Khulna, and Joypurhat.

In a statement, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar said Bangladesh is a country of communal harmony.

The country that failed to protect a diplomatic mission office has no right to talk about Bangladesh, he said.

"The people of Bangladesh do not like the big brother-like attitude. We urge all Bangladeshis to remain vigilant. Only a strong national unity can face foreign aggression."

At a rally in front of Baitul Mukarram mosque, Islami Andolan Bangladesh Secretary General Maulana Yunus Ahmad urged the interim government to bring back the members of Bangladesh High Commission if India fails to ensure their safety.

"India must apologise," he said.

The Jatiya Nagorik Committee, formed after the mass uprising, held a rally in front of the National Museum in Shahbagh and then marched to the Central Shaheed Minar.

Its member Alik Mree said, "Our country is ethnically diverse. People of all religions live in peace. But they are trying to break communal harmony."

Manzur Al Matin, another member, said Hindu, Buddhist,

Christian, and Muslim communities have been living in Bangladesh for centuries.

"But autocrat Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi do not want this. They are scheming against it. We know this is not about religion. It is an imperialist conspiracy," he said.

Nasiruddin Patwary, central convener of the committee, said, "The political environment in South Asia is no longer stable because of India's imperial ambitions.... The attack on the Bangladeshi mission violates the country's sovereignty. We are ready to face Delhi's conspiracies with our unity."

At the Jatiya Press Club, the Gono Odhikar Parishad criticised "misinformation" spread by the Indian media and condemned the attack in Agartala.

Barishal University students demonstrated on campus while students of some other institutions marched different streets in Barishal city.

Students in Joypurhat marched last night with lit torches.

NAHID'S REACTION

"India's ruling elite is engaging in divisive politics and anti-Bangladesh rhetoric. Bangladesh shares historical and cultural ties with West Bengal, Tripura, and Assam; they are our stakeholders. During the uprising in Bangladesh, students from Kolkata and Delhi stood in solidarity with us and protested against Sheikh Hasina's atrocities," Adviser Nahid last night wrote on X.

"These democracy-loving people of India are our friends. However, India's ruling elite and Hindutva forces do not want such democratic relations and harmony. They perceive Bangladesh's uprising and the political awakening of its students as a threat. As a result, they are fostering hatred against Bangladesh. By using the 'minority persecution' narrative, Delhi is attempting to rehabilitate the fascist Awami League and disrupt Bangladesh's democratic and nation-rebuilding process."

The anti-Bangladesh and anti-Muslim politics will not serve India's national interest or contribute to its unity, he wrote.

"Therefore, we call on India to cease false propaganda against Bangladesh and uphold harmony and respect for democracy."

India must not forget that its stability and integrity are closely interlinked with the stability and integrity of Bangladesh, he wrote.

Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain said Indian media were resorting to propaganda.

"Hindu people in our country are living peacefully.... We want to live peacefully with our neighbouring country. We do not want unrest in our country."

NATIONAL UNITY

At his press briefing, Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said Indian media outlets were aggressively trying to spread misinformation against Bangladesh over some recent incidents.

"We have to ask [Indian journalists] to come visit and see what is happening. At the same time, we must maintain our national unity and resist the misinformation campaign."

He urged Bangladeshi media to combat the "dangerous" misinformation campaign.

"We think it's a national responsibility."

Sreepur Bahini of Magura

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Khandaker Sujayet Ali.

As per the decision of the Sangram Parishad, a training camp was set up at the Ansar camp near Nomani Maidan in Magura. The majority of students who went to this training camp were from Sreepur College.

Towards the end of April, anticipating the arrival of the Pakistani army in Magura, the freedom fighters led by Akbar arrived in Sreepur armed with six rifles, walkie-talkies, and ammunition acquired from the Magura Ansar camp.

This marked the formation of Sreepur Bahini, Akbar writes in his book.

Molla Nabuat Ali was made the deputy commander, while Khandaker Nazayet Ali was the co-commander.

and individuals from the Bengal Regiment, East Pakistan Rifles, and Ansar. A training camp was set up in Tupipara village for the new recruits.

The presence of Sreepur Bahini was no longer confined to the Sreepur region and extended to Shaikupa and Harinakunda in Jhenaidah; Pangsha and Baliakandi in Rajbari; and Madhukhali and Nagarkanda in Faridpur, Akbar writes in his book.

MAJOR OPS

A notable operation by the force was the capture of Shaikupa Police Station in Jhenaidah. On the night of August 6, a large contingent of freedom fighters led by Akbar attacked the station.

According to Ismail Hossain, a freedom fighter who participated in the operation, in the face of resistance from the Pakistani forces,

soldiers were killed on August 4.

After the Sreepur Bahini's capture of Shaikupa Police Station, the Pakistani army began advancing towards Sreepur. To resist the incoming enemy forces, the Sreepur Bahini set up defensive perimeters at Sarainagar and Alfapur.

Unable to pass through Sreekol, the Pakistani army was forced to advance along both sides of the Kumar river, leading to intense encounters with the freedom fighters at Mingram and Sarainagar. At one stage, as the Pakistani army entered the Alfapur canal via the river, they were caught in a crossfire.

Kamruzzaman Lal, a freedom fighter of Sreepur Bahini, said, "We were on one side of the canal while another group led by Kamruzzaman Khusu was on the other side.

"As soon as the Pakistanis entered the canal, the Khusu group first started firing. Then we joined from our side, catching the enemy in a crossfire. They didn't think they would be under such a terrible attack."

OTHER NOTABLE OPS

According to the book, Sreepur Bahini recaptured Sreepur Police Station and appointed Akram Hossain as its officer in charge in August. They managed to keep hold of the station briefly before it was taken over by the Pakistanis. The force reclaimed the station for the last time on November 19.

On October 10, more than 500 Pakistani soldiers attacked the Tupipara camp of Sreepur Bahini.

Tipped off, the freedom fighters had earlier left the camp and taken position on the other side of the river. When the Pakistani army attempted to cross the river, six Pakistani soldiers were shot and killed by the freedom fighters.

On October 13, acting on a tip-off about an incoming contingent of enemy soldiers, a group of freedom fighters divided into two groups and set an ambush near Mashalia Mosque.

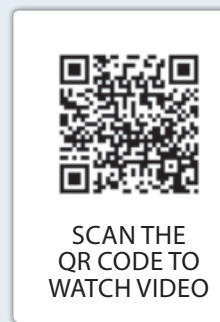
Around an hour later, when a group of Pakistani soldiers were heading towards Langalbandh from Sreepur Police Station, one group of freedom fighters initiated a surprise attack, firing upon the unsuspecting Pakistani soldiers. As the Pakistani army attempted to retreat, they were caught in a crossfire at the hands of the other group of freedom fighters. The fierce engagement resulted in the deaths of 14 Pakistani soldiers, including six officers.

On November 24, eight Pakistani soldiers, including a colonel, were killed in a surprise attack at Nakol Bazar.

Freedom fighter Delwar Hossain, who participated in the operation, stated, "On the night of the operation, we set an ambush with positions on both sides of the canal near the market. Around 7:00pm, we launched an attack as a convoy of Pakistanis approached from the direction of Langalbandh. Although the first car managed to pass through, the second car was not so fortunate.

"Everyone in the Jeep, including the Pakistani colonel, was killed. The Pakistani soldiers in the last military van then opened fire on us. However, after about one and a half hours of fighting, they retreated."

Translated and edited from Bangla by Subrata Roy.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO

Area: Magura's Sadar, Mohammapur, and Sreepur; Jhenaidah's Shaikupa and Harinakunda; Rajbari's Pangsha and Baliakandi; and Faridpur's Madhukhali and Nagarkanda.

Key feat: Kept Magura's Sreepur and Jhenaidah's Shaikupa under their control.

Timeframe: Jun 5-Dec 4.

Operations: At least 30.

Members: At least 800.



Recent photo of Alfapur village on the bank of Kumar river in Jhenaidah's Shaikupa. Here 55 Pakistani soldiers died in a battle with Sreepur Bahini on August 4, 1971.

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK



Recent photo of Sreepur Bahini members.

PHOTO: AHMAD ISTIAK

Nazayet Ali died on December 31, 1976, while Nabuat Ali died at the age of 83 on February 10, 2022.

DUAL-THREAT

At the start of the war, the freedom fighters of Sreepur Bahini were confronted with a dual threat: the Pakistani army and local criminal elements. While the presence of dacoits, bandits, and Bihari criminals, who sided with Pakistan, in the Magura and Faridpur areas had been a concern even prior to the war, their menace intensified following the outbreak of war. Taking advantage of the disruption in administrative activities, these criminals engaged in rampant looting, killing, and even rape.

The elimination of several dacoit gangs significantly boosted the reputation of Sreepur Bahini in the surrounding areas. This newfound recognition attracted a surge of new members, including students, youth,

the fighters retreated and regrouped, later renewing their assault after a brief pause.

Ultimately, the police station fell under the control of the Sreepur Bahini, resulting in the surrender of at least 30 individuals, including police personnel and Razakars.

The freedom fighters recovered 57 rifles and 4,000 bullets from the police station. The capture of the station solidified the position of Sreepur Bahini in Shaikupa.

According to the book, during the war, Sreepur Bahini fought in over 30 battles, including the battle of Alfapur, the battle of Nakol, the battle of Kajli, attacks on the Sreepur Police Station, the Baliakandi Police Station, the Ichakhada and Binodpur Razakar camps, and the Magura Ansar Camp.

The battle of Alfapur in Jhenaidah's Shaikupa was one of the most successful, where 55 Pakistani members, including students, youth,