

Four die after inhaling septic tank gas

All died trying to save each other after phone fell into a toilet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Four people lost their lives after inhaling toxic gas while attempting to retrieve a mobile phone from a septic tank in the remote Harinchhara tea garden of Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila early yesterday.

The victims are Rana Nayek, 17, Shraban Nayek, 19, Krishna Rabidas, 20, and Nipen Fulmali, 27. Their families work in different tea gardens.

Another injured, Rabi Banerjee, was undergoing treatment at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.

According to locals and relatives, the mobile phone accidentally fell into a makeshift toilet around 1:30am. In an attempt to recover it, one of the victims entered the tank and immediately lost consciousness, reportedly due to the presence of toxic gas.

"The victims went down one after another to rescue each other, but none of them made it out," said Dulal Fulmali, a relative of victim Nipen, who was the father of two young daughters and his family's sole breadwinner.

Sabyasachi Pal Tamal of Moulvibazar 250-bed General Hospital said the four were brought dead. Another youth was later admitted with serious injuries, and he was referred to Sylhet for better treatment.

Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sreemangal Police Station, told this correspondent, "An investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the deaths."

ON THIS DAY LAST YEAR

Blockade turns confrontational

FROM PAGE 1

protesters continued to block roads and cause public suffering, citing a Supreme Court directive to maintain the status quo on the quota issue.

Around the same time, Chhatra League President Saddam Hossain addressed the media at Dhaka University, warning that the organisation was prepared to confront any attempt to use the movement for political gain. Meanwhile, police mobilised additional forces, riot cars, and water cannons, particularly around Shahbagh and other strategic points in Dhaka.

At Shahbagh, thousands of students from Dhaka University breached police barricades around 5:00pm. Law enforcers encircled the crowd near Birdem Hospital, preventing them from advancing further, which led to scuffles and angry chants of "bhua" (fake) directed at the police. The demonstrators held their ground at the intersection.

Another group – mostly students from Dhaka College and Eden Mohila College – marched towards Shahbagh but were stopped by police near New Market, where they staged a brief rally vowing to continue their protests. Jagannath University students also joined after breaking the lock on their main gate, marching through Shankhari Bazar and Tantibazar despite multiple police attempts to halt them.

In Cumilla, at least ten students were injured when police charged batons to disperse protesters near the Ansar Camp. Witnesses said the police struck first, and students retaliated by throwing brick chunks. The situation escalated when police fired tear gas, causing further injuries. Fazle Rabbi, director of Cumilla General Hospital, confirmed that six of the injured were treated and released, while the others remained under care.



FILE PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Students break through a police barricade in Shahbagh around 5:30pm on July 11, 2024, during a demonstration demanding reforms to the quota system in government jobs.

Clashes also broke out in Chattogram city, where at least five people were injured in two separate confrontations in the Tigerpass and Gate No-2 areas. Police charged batons on demonstrators attempting to defy barricades. Despite the violence, students held their ground, blocking roads until 7:30pm.

The government responded with mixed signals. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan warned that the students were crossing the line but expressed hope that they would return to their studies, describing them as "educated and intelligent." Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader echoed the call for restraint but cautioned that the government would not tolerate any attempt to use the movement for political anarchy.

The University Grants Commission issued letters to vice-chancellors across the country, urging them to bring students back to classrooms.

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan also weighed in, stating that the courts were always open to hearing the protesters' demands and advising them to seek remedies through the judicial system rather than the executive.

As the day ended, it became clear that the rift between the streets and the state had deepened. The students held their ground, determined to continue until real legislative action on quota reform was secured. But for the first time since the July uprising began, they faced not only political opposition but also the force of the state's security machinery.

Ex-IGP Mamun offers to be a state witness

FROM PAGE 1

Jaiad Bin Amjad, lawyer for Mamun, told The Daily Star that he had submitted an application for his client to become an approver. "The court has granted it. So, from now on, he is considered an approver, not an accused. However, if the tribunal is not convinced by his statement later, it can still treat him as an accused. This is part of the legal process."

Judge Mohitul read the charges as instructed by tribunal chair Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder.

Each charge against Hasina begins with a context from her press conference of July 14, 2024. The charges state that as prime minister and political head of the Awami League led 14-party alliance, Hasina made inflammatory remarks likening protesters with "grandchildren of Razakars" or collaborators of the Pakistani forces during the 1971 Liberation War.

These comments incited law enforcement officials and armed party cadres, according to the charges. Hasina then issued the

order to use lethal force, the prosecution alleged, adding that in turn, the former home minister and ex-IGP executed the orders through subordinate commanders.

The judge read on, "As a result, coordinated armed attacks were carried out nationwide on innocent protesters demanding quota reforms. Drones were used to locate protest sites, followed by attacks with firearms and helicopters. At least 1,500 people were killed and 25,000 injured – many suffering permanent blindness and disabilities."

He also said the victims were denied medical treatment, and no post-mortem examinations were carried out. In the case of Abu Sayed, a student of Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur who was shot dead, the post-mortem report was changed four times.

The judge also said that six people were burned – five already dead and one still alive at the time – in an attempt to destroy evidence.

The ICT-I member also said the tribunal believes there is enough evidence to presume the

accused knowingly and systematically committed offences under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

"Thereby, Sheikh Hasina, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun are formally indicted," he announced.

Former police chief Mamun appeared sombre in the dock in a purple chequered half shirt and gray trousers. Security was tight, with extra police deployed around the tribunal premises.

THE CHARGES

Charge 1: This charge specifies that following Hasina's July 14 press briefing, former home minister Asaduzzaman, former IGP Mamun, and other high officials of the then government abetted, assisted, and were complicit in the severe and systematic attacks on innocent, unarmed students and masses.

Charge 2: This charge is related to Hasina ordering the use of drones and helicopters along with lethal weapons to subdue protesters. It mentions the

telephonic conversation between Hasina and former Dhaka South mayor Fazle Noor Taposh and former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Prof ASM Maksud Kamal where the former premier spoke about the order. The prosecution charged Asaduzzaman and Mamun with facilitating and executing this directive by issuing instructions to law enforcers.

The defendants have been charged with ordering, facilitating, being complicit in, and conspiring to commit these crimes against humanity, knowingly and systematically.

Charge 3: This charge is related to the killing of Rangpur student Abu Sayed.

As part of the widespread and systematic attacks on unarmed student protesters, on July 16, police shot Sayed several times without provocation. The doctor concerned was forced to alter his post-mortem report four times to conceal the actual cause of death. The defendants ordered, incited, abetted, facilitated, were complicit and conspired to commit these crimes against

humanity.

Charge 4: This count is related to the shooting and killing of six unarmed protesters in Dhaka's Chankharpul on August 5 last year.

The prosecutors said the atrocities in Chankharpul were carried out on the defendants' orders, and with incitement, abetment, facilitation, complicity, and conspiracy, constituting crimes against humanity.

Charge 5: The defendants are charged with the shooting of six student protesters, five of whom were killed and burned, while the sixth was reportedly set on fire while still alive, in Ashulia on August 5 last year.

As the judge read the word "burned", he paused and muttered, "Nauzubillah!"

The prosecution contends that the atrocity was carried out knowingly with the defendants' orders, incitement, abetment, facilitation, complicity, and conspiracy, constituting crimes against humanity, including other inhumane acts such as torture and murder.

the's 68 percent pass rate is the lowest since 2009, when it was 67 percent.

In the years between, the pass rate never fell below 80 percent, except in 2018, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics. That year, the pass rate was 79.40 percent.

The number of GPA-5 achievers is also the lowest in six years.

This year, 70.67 percent of female students passed the SSC exams, compared to 65.11 percent of male students, a difference of 5.56 percentage points. Among the total GPA-5 achievers, 66,780 are girls and 58,238 are boys.

Board officials said that students who wish to challenge their results may apply for review from July 11 to July 17. Details are available on the education boards' websites.

This year's SSC and equivalent exams began on April 10 and ended on May 13, with practical exams held from May 15 to 22. Around 19.28 lakh students registered for the exams, over one lakh fewer than last year. Of them, 19.04 lakh appeared in exams.

Of those, 14,79,310 sat under the nine general education boards, 2,86,572 under the Madrasa Board, and 1,38,204 under the Technical Board.

BNP urges EC

FROM PAGE 12

He alleged that a certain quarter has tried to label the BNP as a party opposed to reforms, but it is the BNP that introduced all major reforms in Bangladesh.

"Reform is in our blood. We were born through reforms. So, it is unfair to say that BNP is against reforms. Nothing could be a greater distortion of the truth than claiming BNP is obstructing reforms. We strongly believe in liberal democracy."

Power should change through elections and only an elected government should lead the country and resolve its issues.

"Why are we asking this government for everything? It's just an interim government. Do those involved have better understanding of politics than us? No, they don't. But we have entrusted them with responsibility and we are accepting what's agreed upon through talks."

Speaking about the "July Declaration", Fakhru said the BNP earlier shared its opinion on it and finalised a formal response on Wednesday night after receiving a draft from the government.

"So, where is the problem?"

About the 35 percent tariff imposed by the US, Fakhru said the interim government should have engaged qualified individuals to hold talks

with the US earlier.

"We are in trouble. If a 35 percent tariff is imposed on the garment sector, it will collapse. That means the backbone of our economy will be broken. This is an extremely serious problem."

Fakhru said he does not know how much attention the government has paid to the issue.

"Perhaps time hasn't run out yet. There is still time to discuss these matters so that our industries can survive, our girls' employment isn't lost, and our economy isn't harmed."

About the killings and push-ins at the border, Fakhru said: "I urge journalists to take this matter seriously. This is not a minor issue. It's happening every day. Therefore, it's essential to bring this issue forward with greater importance ..."

If the parliamentary election is not held, a "dark force" will once again come to power, said Nagorik Oikya's President Mahmudur Rahman Manna.

Therefore, every effort must be made to ensure that the election takes place.

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar said political parties may have different opinions, but they should stay united in the interest of the nation and democracy.

He also urged the

political parties to use careful and respectful language while speaking or criticising their opponents so that people do not get the wrong message about the unity among anti-fascist forces.

At the event, a condolence motion was placed for "64 journalists who died during the July uprising and movement against the now ousted regime."

Fakhru handed over crests to the family of late BFUJ president Ruhul Amin Gazi and the families of six other journalists killed during the uprising. At the venue, a photo exhibition was organised on violence against journalists, where over five dozen photos were displayed, highlighting attacks, torture and repression faced by journalists.

The organisations also displayed a banner titled "Journalists Who Were Persecuted During the Fascist Regime," featuring the names of 31 journalists.

DUIJ President Shahidul Islam presided over the event, which was moderated by General Secretary Khurshid Alam.

BNP Standing Committee member AZM Zahid, BFUJ Secretary General Quader Gani Chowdhury and Jatiya Press Club President Hasan Haliz spoke among others.

Manindra added that while every citizen has the right to political affiliation, it should never lead to violence or persecution.

"No one deserves to be silenced or targeted for their identity or beliefs. Such actions have no place in a civilised society."

The council's co-presidents Professor Nim Chandra Bhowmik and Nirmol Rozario, and presidium member Kajal Debnath, were also present at the event.

Economist Barkat held in graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Economist Prof Abul Barkat was arrested in the capital last night in a case filed with the Anti Corruption Commission.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Detective Branch arrested him around 11:30pm at his home on Dhanmondi Road-3.

"As per Anti Corruption Commission's request, the DB team conducted a drive and arrested him," Mohammad Nasirul Islam, joint commissioner (South) of DMP DB told The Daily Star.

"We will hand him over to ACC tomorrow morning," he added.

Prof Abul Barkat is a former chairman of the state-owned Janata Bank PLC.

In February, the ACC filed a case alleging that during his tenure as chairman, Abul Barkat was involved in loan fraud involving AnonTex Group, a ready-made garments company, resulting in the embezzlement of Tk 297 crore from Janata Bank.

The case names 23 individuals as accused, including Abul Barkat, former Janata Bank director Jamal Uddin Ahmed, and former Bangladesh Bank governor Atiur Rahman.

Atiur was the BB governor from 2005 to 2015.

Barkat, former president of the Bangladesh Economic Association and a faculty member at Dhaka University, was appointed chairman of Janata Bank on September 9, 2009, for a three-year term.

He served two consecutive terms, completing five years in the position before stepping down in September 2014.

Earlier, the ACC investigated the same incident of money embezzlement and closed the case in 2022, citing a lack of evidence against the accused.



SSC pass rate plunges to a 16-year low

FROM PAGE 1

time," he said. "We won't comment on past events," he said, referring to the results of previous years. "This time, there was no pressure from higher authorities, and the results genuinely reflect the students' performance."

Only 984 institutions achieved a 100 percent pass rate, down from 2,968 last year, while institutions with zero pass rate rose from 51 to 134.

HUMANITIES STUDENTS LAG BEHIND

Across all general boards, the pass rate in the humanities group was just 53.87 percent, far below science's 85.68 percent and business studies' 66.32 percent.

In Barishal, the humanities pass rate was around 43 percent, compared to 83 percent in science.

A similar trend among humanities students' pass rate has been observed in other boards – 42.84 percent in Mymensingh, 46.56 percent in Dinajpur,

46.77 percent in Cumilla, and 49.54 percent in Dhaka.

BARISHAL ON BOTTOM, RAJSHAHI ON TOP

Poor performance in mathematics and English dragged down Barishal Board, which posted the lowest overall pass rate among the general boards and had just 3,114 GPA-5 achievers.

issued a clear directive: no leniency would be allowed in evaluating papers."

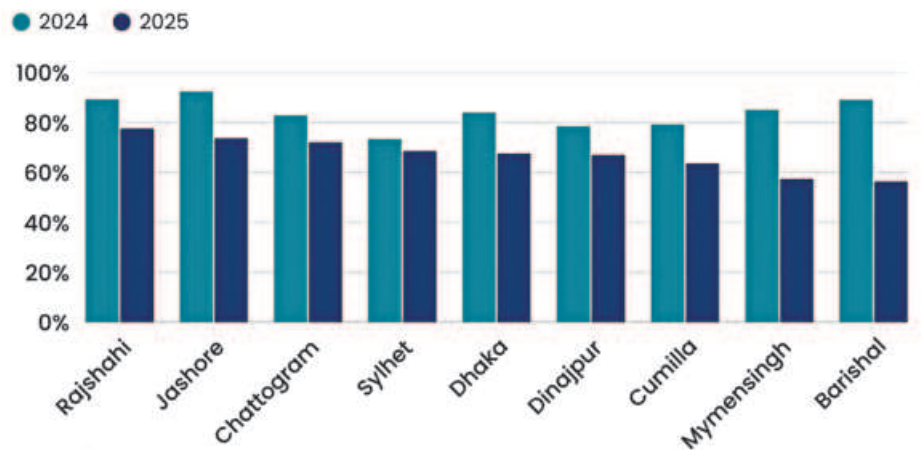
"Moreover, students performed poorly in mathematics and English, especially those from rural areas," he added.

In contrast, Rajshahi Board topped the list with a 77.63 percent pass rate. Here, the pass rate of

Dhaka 67.51 percent, Cumilla 63.60 percent, Dinajpur 67.03 percent, Sylhet 68.57 percent, and Mymensingh 58.22 percent.

In terms of GPA-5 achievers, Dhaka topped the list with 37,068, followed by Rajshahi 22,327, Jashore 15,410, Dinajpur 15,062, Chattogram 11,843, Cumilla 9,902, Mymensingh 6,678,

SSC PASS PERCENTAGE BY BOARD



Prof Md Yunus Ali Siddiqui, chairman of the Barishal Intermediate and Secondary Education Board, told The Daily Star, "This time, the examination was conducted in a completely cheating-free environment, and we strictly followed the rules at every stage. The government

humanities students was 66.20 percent, the highest among all boards. Rajshahi also recorded the highest pass rates in mathematics (86.52 percent) and English (93.10 percent).

The pass rates in other general education boards are: Jashore 73.69 percent, Chattogram 72.07 percent,

and Sylhet 3,614.

In the Dakhil exam under the Madrasa Board, 68,09 percent passed and 9,066 secured GPA-5. Among vocational students, 73.63 percent passed, with 4,948 getting GPA-5.

LOWEST SINCE 2009

An analysis of previous years' data shows that this