

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 Dusal 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."

Ex-IGP Mamun offers to be a state witness

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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-1 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 Abdulla 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.

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.

Speaking about the "July Declaration", Fakhrul 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, Fakhrul 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."

Fakhrul 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."

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."

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with the US earlier.

"Between August 4 and December 31, 2024, we documented 2,184 incidents. With the 258 reported in the first half of 2025, the total rises to 2,442 over the past 11 months."

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.

Responding to earlier government criticism, Manindra said the council's figures are accurate and based on verified reports.

"The council is not making political accusations. We are

drawing attention to repeated attacks on religious minorities. These incidents happened to real people, and it is the government's duty to investigate and act."

He also questioned the government's commitment to inclusive reforms. "What kind of reform excludes 10 percent of the population?" he asked. "This shows a mindset that values political and private interests over building an inclusive nation."

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.

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

DUJ 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 Hafiz spoke among others.

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.

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