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## BNP struggles to rein in the rogues

Launches drive to weed out unruly leaders, activists

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Despite repeated warnings from the top leadership and disciplinary measures, the BNP appears to be failing to maintain control over its rank and file, with leaders and activists across the country allegedly involved in crimes ranging from extortion to rape and murder.

With the next general election on the horizon, the party is now preparing to launch what it calls a “cleanup drive” to axe rogue elements from its ranks.



**Whenever something happens, the BNP's name is immediately dragged into it. Many such incidents later turn out to be false.**

**Salahuddin Ahmed,**  
Standing Committee member

At the same time, BNP leaders argue that the party is being unfairly blamed in several cases.

Over the past 11 months, 349 incidents of political violence took place across the country, leaving 87 people dead and 3,929 injured, according to rights group Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK). BNP and its affiliated organisations were linked to 323 of these incidents, which claimed the lives of at least 77 BNP men and injured 3,653 others.

The party's affiliated bodies Jubo Dal, Swetchhasebak Dal, and Chhatra Dal have recently expelled five activists in connection with the brutal killing of Lal Chand alias Sohag, a scrap metal trader who was attacked in broad daylight in front of Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital.

The murder, allegedly tied to extortion and rivalry over control of the local scrap trade, sparked outrage. Five suspects have been arrested so far.

Other recent high-profile cases include an attack on a police station in Lalmonirhat, the rape of a woman in Bhola's Tazumuddin upazila, the harassment of a former chief election commissioner, and the assault of two women at a Dhaka restaurant and bar. All of these made national headlines and drew criticism across social media.

In Lalmonirhat, BNP activists reportedly attacked the Patgram Police Station and forcibly took away two men who had been sentenced by a mobile court. The party later removed the joint convener of the Patgram municipal unit of Jubo Dal and a former upazila BNP member for their alleged involvement.

When contacted, Patgram upazila BNP President Shapikar Rahman admitted the challenge of controlling such a large organisation. “The BNP is a big party. We cannot say that everyone is innocent. We are giving instructions at the district level for leaders and activists not to get involved in criminal activities, yet these are being violated,” he said.

The party also took action against those involved in the Bhola rape incident. BNP's Bhola district unit Member Secretary Raisul Alam, however, said the party is not responsible for the crimes committed by individual members. “We are not encouraging any of these incidents.

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Protesting the brutal murder of Lal Chand, alias Sohag, a scarp trader, the Students Against Discrimination brought out a torch procession from Shahbagh last night. The procession ended at the Central Shaheed Minar premises.

PHOTO: STAR

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## Is the govt backing the wrongdoers?

Asks Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday questioned whether the government is being lenient on the killers of a scrap trader in front of Mitford hospital due to what he said its silent support for such incidents of mob violence.

He also questioned why the government had not arrested the killers despite having video evidence.

On Wednesday, Lal Chand, alias Sohag, 39, was dragged from his Old Dhaka shop in broad daylight and beaten to death near the gate of Sir Salimullah Medical College

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## JUSTICE FOR SOHAG

## Students, people rally nationwide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protests continued on university campuses and around the country yesterday, calling for justice for Lal Chand, alias Sohag, who was brutally murdered in Old Dhaka on Wednesday.

Political parties, student organisations, and general students took to the streets in the capital as well as Nilphamari, Rangpur, Narsingdi, Barishal, Gopalganj, Magura, Cumilla, Pirojpur, and Chattogram, among other districts.

Students held protests at Dhaka University, Jagannath University, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University, North South University, Brac University, East West University, and other campuses.

At least 15 leaders from various units of Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swetchhasebok Dal resigned from their posts, citing BNP's failure to uphold positive politics and maintain party discipline as reasons.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said the government is committed to ensuring swift justice, while Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said all those responsible will be brought to justice.

On Wednesday, Sohag was dragged out of his Old Dhaka shop in broad daylight and beaten to death near the gate of Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital. His body was crushed with large chunks of concrete. Later, his battered and broken body was left on the street as onlookers watched in horror.

Allegations run rife that Jubo Dal men were involved in the killing.

Students Against Discrimination, from a press conference in front of the National Museum in Shahbagh,

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## RMG sector on edge as tariff talks make no headway

## Bangladesh faces squeeze from rivals

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Uncertainty over the garment industry has deepened as Bangladesh's inconclusive trade talks in Washington stand in stark contrast to favourable deals for its regional rivals.

Bloomberg News reported that the US is working toward an agreement with India that could reduce its proposed tariffs to below 20 percent, while Vietnam has secured an early, favourable deal.

The diverging outcomes threaten to create a multi-tiered tariff landscape in Asia, placing nations like Bangladesh at a serious disadvantage in the US market. The uncertainty is already rippling through the supply chain, with US retailers pausing orders from Bangladesh ahead of the peak Christmas season.

The impasse for Dhaka centres on two key US demands: a 35 percent

tariff set to take effect on August 1, and a difficult 40 percent local value-addition requirement for goods to qualify as “Made in Bangladesh”. The latter is a major challenge for the woven sector, which imports over 70 percent of its fabric from China.

“Work orders have been put on hold by buyers,” said Ramzul Seraj, managing director of Elite Garments Ltd, an exporter to the US.

A Reuters report on Friday revealed that suppliers to Walmart have also delayed or suspended some orders with garment manufacturers in Bangladesh.

This contrasts with the situation for its competitors. On July 2, President Donald Trump announced a 20 percent tariff rate for Vietnam, the primary rival in global garment trade. Now, India appears poised to do even better. If finalised, Bloomberg

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**Bangladesh needs to improve efficiency by reducing the cost of doing business to be more competitive.**

**MASRUR REAZ,**  
chairman, Policy Exchange

## SOHAG MURDER

## Action taken against those involved

Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said legal action has been initiated against those involved in the killing of Lal Chand alias Sohag.

Five people have been arrested over the brutal murder, which took place in Old Dhaka's Mitford area on Wednesday, he told journalists during a briefing after inspecting the living conditions of police personnel at the Mill Barracks area in Dhaka.

The case, filed by the victim's sister Manjuara Begum, names 19 individuals and mentions 15 to 20 unnamed others.

Of the named accused, Mahin was detained by Dhaka Metropolitan Police just after the incident on Wednesday. Following up on his information, Robin was arrested early Thursday with a weapon

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This home in Majhirghat of Shariatpur's Zajira upazila was destroyed by sudden erosion on July 7, putting the Padma Bridge's main protection embankment at risk. The Water Development Board later dumped sandbags along the banks and prevented the erosion from spreading further. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: JAHID HASSAN

## Cops gathering info on polls candidates

Say initiative to ‘avert unrest’ during election

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The Police Headquarters has launched a nationwide drive to collect information on potential candidates to ensure the upcoming general election is peaceful and violence-free.

The data collection began last week, with all police stations instructed to submit structured reports covering 11 key areas for each likely candidate. These include criminal background, police records, and the potential to incite unrest.

Based on the findings, law enforcers will assess security needs in each constituency and identify candidates who may pose risks.

Experts have warned that “uncoordinated surveillance by multiple agencies” could lead to misuse if not handled carefully.

A senior official at the PHQ, requesting anonymity, said, “We are gathering information to help shape election security strategies. It will allow us to identify areas requiring heightened security and assess which candidates or their supporters are more likely to instigate violence.

“This proactive approach is aimed at preventing any form of violence or irregularities before they occur.”

The initiative has been categorised as highly urgent. In a letter sent to all police stations, a copy of which The Daily Star has seen, the PHQ instructed officers to submit the information in table format, detailing each

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