

## Yunus assures probe into

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is praying for the injured from a distance.

“I have no words. I don’t even know how to begin. Like me, people across the country are stunned and in shock today. None of us could have imagined such a tragedy. It was beyond anyone’s thoughts. And yet, we were suddenly forced to accept this unthinkable reality,” the chief adviser said, starting his speech in an emotional, choked voice.

“What answer will we give to their parents? What will we say to them? We can’t even answer ourselves. The innocent faces of children we never knew keep flashing before our eyes.”

He said the entire nation is stunned and speechless. “Even the word ‘sorrow’ seems too little to describe what we are feeling. The shock of this tragedy hasn’t worn off yet. Bodies are still arriving at hospitals. Children are still dying in hospitals. Parents are still desperately searching, asking where their sons or daughters are. Some may never recognise them again.”

“The bodies we’re seeing – how can anyone tell which one is their own child? There’s no way to trace them. These children were ours – all of ours. Suddenly, they are gone forever,” the chief adviser added.

He extended his deepest sympathy to the parents, families, and loved ones of all those killed and injured in the crash incident.

“Every child in Bangladesh is your child too. We will try to find some comfort in our hearts, and we are all sharing this grief with you. The entire nation stands with you in this moment of sorrow,” Prof Yunus said.

He mentioned that the government has already announced a state mourning today to pay tribute to the victims.

“We will remember them together. We will pray for peace for their souls. From today, we ask everyone to pray for them, for their forgiveness and eternal peace. May Allah grant you peace. May Allah bring peace to everyone in our nation who has been devastated by this tragedy. We are all praying for them,” he added.

## Dhaka on ‘right

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Meanwhile, local garment exporters, who face one of the steepest tariffs in the US market, are closely watching the developments.

Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said the impact of the current US tariffs varies widely across factories.

Of 1,322 member factories, 146 export 81-100 percent of their products to the US, and 91 factories export 61-80 percent. Another 87 factories export 41-60 percent, according to BGMEA data.

“We will face a lot of challenges if the tariff is not lowered,” Khan told The Daily Star.

Shovon Islam, managing director of Sparrow Group, which exports \$150 million worth of goods to the US annually – half of his company’s total exports – said some American buyers have already asked him to share half of the 35 percent tariff burden.

Others are frustrated with the high duty, he said.

Islam added that he, along with some of the buyers, are still hopeful the negotiations will yield results.

A businessman said a private sector group, particularly from the garment industry, is now lobbying to involve American buyers in seeking a reduced tariff for Bangladesh.

## PR system

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of martyrs, we would surely have finalised it by now,” he said, calling to finalise the list in a year a “collective shame.”

“Please, do not betray the blood of the martyrs,” he added.

He said fascism cannot be prevented only by the formulation and enactment of laws.

“It is often the disregard for the rule of law that turns individuals into fascists or autocrats. To prevent such tendencies within the state, the people must be empowered, both politically and economically, as I have repeatedly said,” Tarique added.

He said if people remain empowered and retain the ability to exercise their political rights, then their unity is sufficient to resist fascism or authoritarianism.

That’s why BNP is demanding the formation of a government directly elected by the people, to ensure that the will and power of the people are effectively upheld in the governance of the state, Tarique added.

Drawing the attention of the interim government, Tarique said the government set priorities straight to run the administration smoothly.

# Curfewed calm, burning rage

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

On July 22, 2024, the nation witnessed a fragile calm after nearly a week of violent unrest. While capital Dhaka saw no fresh clashes on the third day of a strict nationwide curfew, the country continued to grapple with the aftermath. The death toll climbed further as six more injured individuals succumbed to their wounds, and tensions remained high amid mass arrests, political accusations, and heightened security presence.

Four of the victims succumbed to their injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), with hospital authorities confirming that they had suffered either bullet or shotgun pellet wounds.

In addition, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station’s Officer-in-Charge Ahad Ali said police recovered two more bodies from the National Institute of Neuroscience and Hospital. These were later sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for autopsies. The victims had reportedly sustained injuries during clashes in Uttara and Gulshan over the preceding days.

With these latest fatalities, the nationwide death toll since July 15 rose to at least 146. The unrest began that day when six people were killed in violent clashes related to the ongoing quota reform movement.

In a separate development, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan stated that three police personnel had been killed and 1,117 others injured across the country during confrontations



surrounding the quota protests.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Administration sent a proposal to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the afternoon, recommending that 93 percent of civil service recruitment be based on merit, with the remaining 7 percent reserved for quotas. The revised quota system was proposed to apply to recruitment for grades 9 through 20 across government, semi-government, and autonomous bodies.

Addressing a meeting with leading businesspeople at her office, then prime minister Sheikh Hasina issued a stern warning against the “BNP-Jamaat clique,” vowing that they would not be spared this time as they had been in the past. She accused them of attempting to carry out terrorist activities during the ongoing curfew.

On the same day, Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman expressed optimism that stability would soon return, crediting the military’s presence for the improving situation.

The University Teachers Network (UTN) issued a statement urging the government to withdraw the nationwide curfew and restore internet services to ease public suffering. The disruption, they said, was severely affecting access to essential services.

According to police, 1,427 people were arrested across the country in connection with the recent violence over the last three days. Of them, 692 were detained in the capital, while the rest were arrested in 16 other districts.



“Don’t take Baba away!” — Little Tayeba ran after the prison van carrying her father to jail, while her mother, Mona, tried to hold her back. Mizan, a CNG driver, had been arrested from their home in the capital’s Jatrabari the previous night in connection with a case over. He was produced before the CMM court, which sent him to jail on the afternoon of July 22, 2024.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# July Charter must be made in 10 days

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“Some parties may still have minor suggestions or feedback. We have requested that you organise and submit those suggestions to us by today [yesterday], so that we can present them tomorrow and try to reach a decision or we must make decisions ourselves.”

He reminded attendees that the commission has only 10 days left, including yesterday, to finalise the process. “We’ve already discussed many issues; the rest will be addressed as well.”

Highlighting the significance of the political dialogue, he said, “In the preliminary stage, you agreed or disagreed on many matters. We consider crucial areas like state structure, system of governance, and principles of good governance.

“We have presented them again for further discussion. On eight such issues, consensus has been built, although in some cases, notes of dissent have been recorded.”

Prof Riaz said, “We must decide within the next 10 days. Where consensus is possible, we shall have it. Where disagreement remains, it will remain. If the majority supports a decision, we cannot dismiss it simply because of disagreement. There is no

position from us that says it should be abandoned.”

He added that they have presented these issues because they consider these essential for state structure reform. “If we evaluate them properly, we can reach a unified position within 10 days and formulate the National Charter. If your cooperation continues, we can come to that unified point.”

Chief adviser’s Special Assistant Monir Hayder presided over the session.

Commission members – Safar Raj Hossain, Badiul Alam Majumdar, Iftekharuzzaman, and Ayub Mia – were also present.

During yesterday’s talks, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed reiterated his party’s position, saying that the prime minister should also serve as the leader of parliament to ensure the legislature functions effectively.

He added, “There should be flexibility to allow a party chief to become the prime minister. The ruling party should decide which of their lawmakers is going to be the prime minister.”

Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant General Secretary Hamidur Rahman Azad said his party opposed the PM’s dual

roles as a party chief.

Tipu Biswas, chief coordinator of the Jatiya Gano Front, said a person becomes an autocrat while working as the premier and a party chief.

Mushtuq Hossain, presidium member of Bangladesh Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, said the prime minister could be the leader of the parliament but must not hold the post of a party chief.

Amar Bangladesh Party, Gano Forum, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Nizam-e-Islami Party, Rashtra Sangskar Andolan, among others, supported that the proposal that the prime minister and the leader of the parliament could be the same person.

But representatives of the parties strongly recommended that the prime minister must not hold the position of a party chief.

National Citizen Party Joint Convener Javed Rasin said a party chief must resign from the post before taking oath as the prime minister.

Representatives of the Communist Party of Bangladesh and Socialist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist) supported that a party chief must not be the PM, but they suggested not including this provision in the constitution.

# Villages deserted fearing arrest

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Meanwhile, panic continues to grip Gopalganj residents due to the ongoing police drives. So far, police have filed eight cases accusing more than 8,400 people over the deaths and the violence.

On a visit yesterday to several villages in Tungipara upazila, about 15 kilometres from the Gopalganj town, this correspondent learnt from locals that police were patrolling the streets all day long and conducting raids at night.

Residents of Paanch Kahania, Keralakopa, and Gimadanga under Tungipara municipality reported experiencing blackouts during the police raids at night.

Md Maruf Sheikh, a van driver from the Charpara Fakir Bari area of Tungipara, said, “Police entered into our village last night [Sunday night]. I, along with many others, fled from home. I returned home at around 2:00am.”

Aslam Sheikh from Gimadanga village said the roads take on a deserted look after evening.

Visiting Bagherkul, Dariarkul, Baladanga, and Balagati villages, this correspondent found that all the male members have fled home.

Some 15 to 20 panic-stricken women were found to have taken shelter in the residence of a local BNP leader.

“Police came to my house around 9:00pm last night [Sunday night]. They were looking for my husband, who was not home. They forced me to open the door and questioned me about my husband’s whereabouts,” said a woman on condition of anonymity.

“How can we feel safe to stay home at night when the male family members are on the run even though

they are not accused in any case? So, we decided to meet with the BNP leader,” she added.

The BNP leader Khalid Biswas told The Daily Star, “There’s an atmosphere of arrest panic here. These women have come to my house. I tried to contact the deputy commissioner but couldn’t reach him. I then informed the officer-in-charge of police, who told me there is no issue with the male members returning home.”

Khalid, organising secretary of BNP’s Tungipara upazila unit, said, “I plan to sit with the women after Maghrib prayers today [yesterday] and will try to arrange a video conference with the district administration to reassure them.”

Meanwhile, the number of inmates in Gopalganj District Jail has sharply increased in recent days.

Acting Jail Superintendent Tania Zaman told The Daily Star that although the jail has a capacity of 360, it is currently holding 865 inmates.

“Normally, the number of inmates stays around 600,” she said.

Dozens of individuals arrested in Gopalganj in recent drives were transferred to Pirojpur district jail on Saturday due to a lack of space in Gopalganj district jail.

Attempts were made several times to contact the Superintendent of Police (SP) of Gopalganj district Md Mizanur Rahman both at his office and over the phone to enquire about the public’s fear of arrest and alleged harassment. However, he could not be reached for comment.

With one person arrested in the 24 hours till yesterday noon, a total of 322 people have so far been arrested in connection with the violence, said police.

# Hospital corridors echo

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Inside, medical professionals scrambled through triage, fielding frantic inquiries from terrified families while trying to log patients’ names and statuses. Medical staff worked under crushing pressure, managing oxygen cylinders, administering pain relief, and coordinating surgeries. Cries of pain echoed through the halls.

Among the wounded was nine-year-old Nusrat, her arm wrapped in thick white gauze. Her uncle had been en route to pick her up from school when he saw the crash unfold. He pulled her from the wreckage with his bare hands. Her mother said she had suffered 25 percent burns.

A panicked man soon approached them, searching for his friend’s missing daughter, Nahia Ashraf. He explained that Nahia’s brother had already been admitted to the ICU with 95 percent burns. On the fourth floor of the institute, a paper taped to the wall bore a stark testimony: next to patient names were numbers – 40 percent, 80 percent, and for some, 100 percent.

Outside that room, more than a hundred relatives gathered. Some sat silent on the floor, others wept in one another’s arms. Grief and dread hung thick in the air.

In another corridor, a female student in her Milestone School uniform recounted that she and her twin brother were both at school that day. She had left early, around 12:40pm – just half an hour before the school’s scheduled closure. Her brother wasn’t as lucky; he was now among the patients being treated inside.

In one corner of the hospital, Akhlma Parvin stood crying in the hallway. Her son, Tawfiq Hossain, a class five student, had just been admitted.

“He had breakfast with me in the morning. I cooked his favourite meal. He was supposed to come back and eat lunch,” she said.

Parvin added, “When I heard the blast, I rushed towards the school. I found him injured. He wrapped his arms around me and begged me to save him.”

Elsewhere, a woman clung to a

relative, sobbing as she described seeing the plane strike the school. Her daughter, also present during the crash, was later found and admitted to the hospital. Her condition was described as stable.

On the sixth floor, crowds gathered outside treatment rooms. Hospital staff struggled to keep them out, citing infection risks. “Your entry may cause infection,” one of them warned, trying to control the influx of visitors and concerned relatives.

The scene outside was no less chaotic. Political leaders, advisers, and delegations from various professional bodies arrived at the hospital, often with entourages, unintentionally disrupting emergency operations.

As the sun dipped low, the streets surrounding the institute swelled with people holding makeshift signs, pleading for blood donations, especially negative types. One sign simply read: “O Negative Needed Urgently.”

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed addressed reporters at the institute. “Our immediate priority is to ensure the best possible treatment for the victims. We will look later if any other support is needed.”

The National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, inaugurated in October 2018, is the world’s largest facility of its kind. With 500 beds, 50 intensive care units, and 12 state-of-the-art operating theatres across 12 floors, it was built to handle one of the most catastrophic medical emergencies.

Today, it is being tested once more.

## Yarlung dam

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cooperation in trade, infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, fisheries, green energy, disaster management, and tourism.

Wen also referred to recent meetings between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain in Kuala Lumpur.

Both sides stressed the need for stronger collaboration and people-to-people exchange as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of Bangladesh–China diplomatic ties this year.

Parul, a resident of Diabari, was one of them. Her daughter Nusrat Akhter, a third grader, had been missing since the crash. “Where is my daughter? They are not letting anyone in. Please help me find her. I want her back,” she cried.

Third-grader Raisa Moni’s mother waited the whole day, silently praying her child wouldn’t become another statistic.

Eventually, Raisa’s brother Jakir Hossain sent their exhausted mother home. “I went to Dhaka Medical, CMH, Uttara Adhunik, and four other hospitals. I can’t find our Raisa,” he said last night.

Sazzan, who brought both his children home, said, “Watching little burnt children come out of the building, hearing the screams – it was unbearable ... I brought mine home... but how many parents are still waiting? How many are watching their children suffer in hospitals? How many came back to homes with no children left to return?”

“Will the state again escape accountability, hiding behind the excuse of an ‘accident’?”