PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS, PALASH KHAN, AMRAN HOSSAIN

THE DAY AFTER…*Bottom left:* Relatives of Raisa Moni were showing her picture to those at the crash site as she had remained missing since the incident. She was later found dead at CMH yesterday. *Top left:* Students of West End High School in Dhaka's Azimpur praying for the victims of the Milestone school jet crash. *Centre top left:* Two volunteer bikers stationed themselves in front of the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery offering free rides to victims of the crash and their families. *Centre top right:* Students protesting in front of the main gate of the Secretariat, demanding the resignation of Education Adviser CR Abrar. *Top right:* Aminul Islam Jony holding the NID card of his wife Lamia Akter Sonia, who had gone to pick up their daughter Zaira from Milestone school. Zaira was found unharmed but Lamia had been missing since the crash on Monday. *Centre:* Students of Milestone School and College yesterday confined Law Adviser Asif Nazrul and Education Adviser CR Abrar, who had gone to visit the crash site. *Bottom right:* Milestone students protesting in front of the wreckage at the school campus to press home their six-point demand.

Same person can't be party chief, PM

Yesterday's discussions focused on three key issues: restrictions on a single person holding multiple top posts, the formation of a caretaker government and appointment mechanisms for constitutional and statutory bodies.

About three-fourths of the political parties supported separating the roles of the prime minister and party chief, although they were open to the same person serving as the leader of the house and the PM, according to Riaz.

There was also broad support for establishing a constitutional bar to prevent excessive concentration of power, he said, adding that the dissenting parties were encouraged to reconsider.

The BNP, LDP, Labour Party, NDM and the 12-party alliance opposed the separation of posts.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed argued that in a democratic system, MPs have the right to choose their leader, even if that person is the party chief.

Citing the cases of the US and the UK, he said there is no reason to bar party leaders from becoming PM.

Jamaat-e-Islami's Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher supported separating the roles.

"We want the prime minister and the leader of the house to be the same person, but not the party chief. This will encourage intra-party democracy," he said.

National Citizens Party (NCP) member secretary Akhtar Hossen echoed the same, saying that the concentration of power in one person threatens democracy.

"We support having different people in these three roles. However, consensus has emerged around the idea that the PM and the leader of the House may be the same, but not the party chief," he said.

While most parties agreed on the need for a neutral interim government to oversee elections, no final consensus

has emerged on how to form it, Riaz said.

The commission tabled a proposal for a five-member search committee to recommend a Chief Adviser. The suggested members include the PM, the opposition leader, the speaker, the deputy speaker from the opposition and a representative of the third-largest party.

The BNP proposed reverting to a modified version of the 13th amendment caretaker system if consensus could not be reached through the committee.

Salahuddin also shared his party's own search committee model with four members: the PM, speaker, the opposition leader and deputy speaker, who would be from the opposition.

If consensus isn't reached, a 12-name shortlist -- five each from the government and the opposition and two from the third party -- can be created.

The BNP opposes the method of rank choice voting for selecting the chief adviser.

"We want unanimous decisions, but failing that, we propose reverting to the 13th Amendment model," he added.

The five-member search panel would select the chief adviser from lists submitted by the parliamentary parties, Taher said.

However, he cautioned that no side should be able to dominate the process using the majority or voting mechanisms.

There are similarities between the BNP and Jamaat proposals, particularly in forming the search panel and soliciting nominations, though some differences remain, he added.

NCP supports replacing the judiciary-linked caretaker model with a politically negotiated process, Akhtar said, while advocating for ranked-choice voting to reach consensus on a neutral chief adviser.

The commission also proposed changes to the appointment processes for key institutions: the Election Commission, the Public Service Commission, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the Ombudsman.

A seven-member search committee was proposed, led by the speaker and including the PM, the opposition leader, deputy speaker, a representative of the third-largest party and one nominee each from the president and chief justice.

Interested individuals would submit applications that would be vetted through a transparent review process. Recommended names would be forwarded to the president for final appointment.

For the Election Commission in particular, an appointment committee could include three elected representatives, one Appellate Division judge nominated by the chief justice and one representative of the president, Riaz said.

While some parties responded positively, discussions will continue today.

Akhtar questioned the lack of a single independent appointment body, warning against reverting to party-based systems.

Appointments must be party-free, independent, coordinated and constitutionally defined, he said.

The BNP did not participate in the session on appointments.

Salahuddin said his party would comment in the next session.

Jamaat also said the issue wasn't extensively discussed.

Earlier in the day, the Consensus Commission adopted a resolution expressing condolences over the tragic crash of a Bangladesh Air Force fighter jet at Milestone School and College.

Representatives of all participating political parties signed the resolution in solidarity.

Nation mourns lost children

Surgery around 12:15am today, said Resident Surgeon Shawon Bin Rahman.

Nafi's elder sister, Nazia Tabassum, 13, died on Tuesday night, he added.

There was no immediate statement from the health ministry on Nafi's death.

Earlier, the ministry put the death toll at 28, citing double count at certain hospitals. It said 68 patients were undergoing treatment at five hospitals.

The ministry has formed a multidisciplinary committee to oversee treatment efforts. To assist the efforts, Chong Si Jack, a senior consultant and member of a medical team from Singapore General Hospital, arrived last night, said a health ministry official.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs yesterday said it was sending a team of burn-specialist doctors and nurses to Dhaka to treat the injured.

The incident shook the nation to its core, as most of the victims of Monday's crash were schoolchildren who had just been let out of class.

An ordinary school day turned into a colossal tragedy when a Bangladesh Air Force F-7 BGI jet suffered a mid air mechanical fault and ploughed into the school, engulfing the ground floor of a two-story building on the campus in flames and smoke. The building housed classrooms for third and fourth grade students on the ground floor, and the room struck by the plane was used for class three.

Yesterday, the national flag was flown at half-mast at all government, semi-government, autonomous, and educational institutions across the country to mourn the victims.

The bodies of 20 victims, including the jet's pilot, have been handed over to their families. Many of them took their loved ones' bodies back to their home districts.

Meanwhile, students of Milestone School and College staged daylong protests on their Diabari campus, demanding an accurate list of the dead and injured, and a public apology for the alleged assault on teachers after the crash.

The agitating students also prevented two advisers and officials from the Chief Adviser's Press Wing from leaving the campus for nine hours after they went there to convey their sympathies to the students and

teachers. They were finally escorted out around 7:30pm.

NUMBER MISMATCH

Before the late-night update, the ISPR had put the death toll at 31 – nine more than the previous day.

According to ISPR data, 16 people died at the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), 10 at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, two at Lubana General Hospital, and one each at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Uttara Adhunik Medical College Hospital, and United Hospital. It also said 165 others were injured in the incident.

However, during a press briefing at the burn institute around 3:30pm, Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum stated that the official death toll stood at 29.

Asked about the discrepancy, Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, said the ISPR had reported 16 deaths at CMH, but the ministry had confirmed 15.

He also mentioned confusion regarding a reported death at Uttara Adhunik Medical College Hospital.

"We are in talks with the ISPR and hope to resolve the confusion soon," he added.

Later, the health ministry released a revised list based on updates until 5:00pm, putting the official death toll at 28.

According to the ministry's latest update around 10:30pm, the death toll remained unchanged.

As per the list, 15 died at CMH, 10 at the National Burn Institute, and one each at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Lubana General Hospital and Cardiac Centre, and United Hospital.

Clarifying the change, a ministry official said earlier reports had mentioned two deaths at Lubana Hospital. "However, one of them, Omaiya Nur Ashfiq, was actually brought to United Hospital. As a result, the death toll at Lubana decreased by one," he said, requesting anonymity.

Among the 28 deceased, the identities of seven have yet to be confirmed, and efforts are underway to identify them. Sixty-eight victims were receiving treatment at five hospitals, including 42 at the National Burn Institute and 23 at CMH, he said.

Prof Sayedur said the condition of 10 patients at the burn institute was critical. Of the 28 confirmed dead, 25

were children, two were teachers of the country, he added.

CRY, WAIT AT BURN INSTITUTE

Unlike Monday, when hundreds of people disrupted services at the 500-bed hospital, authorities allowed only patients, their relatives, and hospital staff inside the hospital yesterday.

Army men were seen guarding the entrance to the hospital.

One of our correspondents, allowed into the hospital, witnessed harrowing scenes as distraught families waited outside the ICU for news of their loved ones.

"Any news of Makin?" Saleha Naznin repeatedly asked her husband, Mohammad Mohsin, each time someone emerged from the ICU.

Her son, Abdur Musabbir Makin, a class 7 student, suffered severe burns.

"Please, bring my Makin to me," she kept repeating, as her son fought for his life inside.

Mohsin said his youngest son stayed back for an extra class after official school hours ended at 1:00pm.

"He's not well. He's on ventilation," he said, fighting back tears.

Asked if he spoke to Makin, Mohsin said, "When I saw him, he said, 'Abbu, take me away from here.' That's all. I just want to take my son home, healthy."

Outside the ICU, Abdur Rahim, a fish trader from Abdullahpur, waited for updates on his only daughter, Samia Akter, a fourth-grader at Milestone.

He said Samia was on the second floor of the school building when the plane hit. Panicked, as the students were trying to escape the building, Samia fell on the floor and was trampled.

While Saleha and Rahim knew their loved ones were in the ICU, others were still searching in anguish.

Outside the morgue of the institute, Aminul Islam Jony was desperately looking for his wife, Lamia Akter Sonia. She had gone to the school to pick up their daughter Zaira, a third-grader.

"I found my daughter crying at the site with the help of a stranger," Jony said. "But I haven't found my wife. Please, help me find her."

He said he had searched hospitals across Uttara and even the Combined Military Hospital (CMH), but in vain.

"No one has seen her," he said. "All we've found is a burnt copy of her NID card circulating on social media."

Rohan's run for survival

While people across the country cried, praying for his survival, an elderly man quietly wept in coach-3 of a Metro train headed for Motijheel from Uttara around 3:10pm.

Asked why he was crying, the man, Zakir Hossain, said, "My nephew was burnt in the jet crash. I've come from Sandwip to see him. I'm going to the National Burn Institute."

Pointing to a video on his phone, his voice trembled as he said, "That boy running through the school field with a burning body, trying to survive -- that's my nephew."

And thus, the child gained a name, a family, a voice. He was 14-year-old Robiul Hasan Nabil – Rohan to his family.

A seventh grader of the English version of Milestone School and College, Rohan's body caught fire when a fighter jet crashed into the school on Monday afternoon.

As he ran out of the school, trying to reach a hospital by himself, some people helped him and took him to Uttara Adhunik Hospital, where he gave staffers his parents' phone numbers. The teenage boy then waited patiently, his body shivering in pain.

Inside the Metro coach, as Zakir's

sobs grew louder, the weight of his grief gripped everyone nearby. Next to him was Rohan's father, Nizam Uddin.

"Please pray for my son," he said, his voice cracking.

Remembering the horror, Nizam told The Daily Star, "Rohan was running with his body all burnt. He had no clothes on.

"At some point, some people boarded him onto a rickshaw in that condition and took him to Uttara Adhunik Hospital. We had no idea what had happened even then."

Trying to stay composed, he added, "My little boy is brave. Even though people panicked after seeing the video, his heart was strong. At the hospital, he gave someone his mother's mobile number himself. That's how we found out where he was."

After the family was contacted and Rohan was moved to the burn institute, his mother Nasima Begum has remained by his side.

Another uncle of Rohan's, Motachher Hossain, also rushed to Dhaka from their home in Chattogram's Sandwip.

The father and uncles were heading to the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery from Rohan's residence

on Road 15, Sector 12 in Uttara.

As Nizam spoke, Motachher quietly wiped away his tears.

Rohan's elder brother Shihab and only sister Nasrin Sultana Nupur were also students of the same school.

"For years, I've sent my children to this school," Nizam said. "On Monday, I dropped Rohan off like any other day. But he didn't come back home."

As surrounding passengers heard their story, the atmosphere turned heavy with sorrow and prayers.

Some gasped, others shook their heads in disbelief. And yet, amid the sadness, there was unity – everyone on board shared a connection of hope for Rohan and his family.

Rohan is now undergoing treatment in the High Dependency Unit of the Burn Institute, with 50 percent flame burns.

Contacted, Shawon Bin Rahman, residential surgeon at the institute, told The Daily Star yesterday, "If a patient is in the HDU, it is assumed that the condition is critical.... We are doing our best for all the patients to recover."

Like Rohan, several other children were seen in viral videos – burned and running alone to safety – since the incident.

Govt failing on law and order

take a stronger stance in upholding law and order.

The chief adviser said the country would benefit if the unity among the parties were made more visible. "If the parties stand together and the public sees this, it would create a sense of reassurance among the people," Asif quoted Yunus as saying.

Asif Nazrul said the chief adviser invited the four parties to discuss the current state of the country. Several advisers were also present at the meeting.

Asif Nazrul said the discussion took place in a very cordial atmosphere, and parties affirmed that there is no disagreement among them regarding unity against fascism.

However, some noted that criticism is part of the process and it does not mean they are adversaries; they remain allies.

"They identified that in various parts of the country, banned parties and fascist collaborators are occasionally trying to resurface. They have advised that we take strict administrative measures," Asif Narul said.

He said, "The BNP specifically emphasised that we [government] should move forward in an orderly manner regarding the electoral process."

A source present at the meeting told The Daily Star that BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told the chief adviser, "We will not spare the fascists.

"If the government can go for elections soon, many of the country's pressing issues will be resolved," the source quoted Fakhrul as saying.

Strongly criticising the government, Jamaat-e-Islami's Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Muhammad Taher said a breakdown in law and order is now

clearly visible.

He urged the chief adviser to take stern action against those responsible and to identify the perpetrators of recent violent incidents.

National Citizens Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam expressed dissatisfaction over the government's response to the recent Gopalganj incident.

"There should be visible, stern action against those involved in the Gopalganj incident," he told the chief adviser.

Islami Andolon's Joint Secretary General Gazi Ataur Rahman told the reporters that the chief adviser called for strong national unity to resist "fascist conspiracies".

Gazi Ataur cited repeated security lapses at key institutions like the Secretariat and urged investigations into intelligence and administrative shortcomings.