

The red wave of defiance

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reflections and diplomatic reactions, the country witnessed an outpouring of grief, defiance, and demands for accountability. The High Court expressed deep sorrow over the deaths resulting from the recent unrest. “These deaths are sad for all of us,” said a bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice SM Masud Hossain Dolon during a hearing on a writ petition related to the violence.

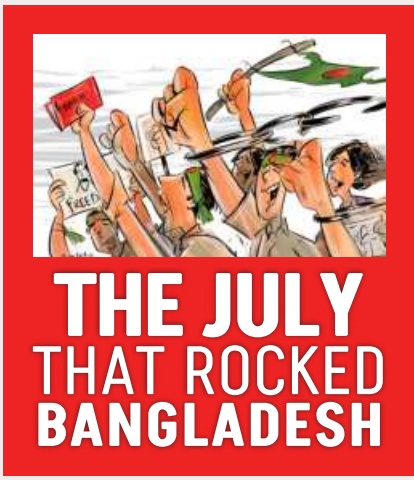
At Jahangirnagar University, teachers and students staged a silent protest under the banner “Jahangirnagar Against Oppression.” With red cloths covering their mouths and parts of their faces, they marched from the university’s Shaheed Minar around 12:30pm, condemning the harassment, detention, and torture of students and calling for a thorough investigation into the indiscriminate killings. Faculty members at Rajshahi University, under the banner “RU Teachers Against Oppression,” organised a similar demonstration. Over 200 teachers participated in the procession that began at the Shaheed Intellectual Memorial at 11:30am and ended with a rally at the university’s main gate.

In Khulna, hundreds of students blocked the Shibbari intersection around 11:30am for more than three hours, chanting slogans like “Shooting won’t stop the movement” and “One point, one demand—step down Sheikh Hasina.” Many citizens joined the demonstration in solidarity. “Bullets bought with our fathers’ tax money are being used against us,” said one protester. “We demand justice for the students who were shot and killed.”

In Tangail, quota reform protesters wearing red badges attempted a march on Registrypara Road around noon. However, police intercepted the procession near the Girls’ School intersection, preventing it from continuing.

Online, a wave of digital protest swept across platforms. Students, teachers, guardians, and others changed their profile photos to solid red in solidarity with the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement’s call. The action defied the government-imposed restrictions on websites, including Facebook, with many users bypassing the blocks using VPNs. The movement had rejected the government-declared nationwide mourning.

A fresh wave of mobilisation was



JULY 30, 2024

announced in the evening. The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, through a press release signed by one of the coordinators Abdul Hannan Masud, called for a “March for Justice” to be held at all educational institutions, court premises, and major roads next day. Their nine-point demand included an apology from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the resignation of several ministers—including those of Home, Education, Law, Information, and Communications—and the dismissal of top police officials in districts where students had been killed. They also demanded the resignation of university vice-chancellors and proctors who had failed to protect peaceful protesters, immediate reopening of all institutions and dormitories, and the withdrawal of military, BGB, Rab, and police forces from campuses.

International voices added to the pressure. UN Secretary-General António Guterres expressed concern over reports of excessive use of force and credible evidence of human rights violations. EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell condemned the shoot-on-sight orders and unlawful killings, calling for thorough investigations and accountability.

According to official data, the government put the death toll at 150. However, The Daily Star’s count showed at least 163 confirmed deaths, with fears



Teachers and students of Jahangirnagar University staged a silent march on July 30, 2024, with red cloths covering their faces, protesting the torture and detention of students and demanding justice for those killed during the quota reform protests.

PHOTO: FILE/AKHLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH

the actual toll could be even higher. Many critically injured patients were admitted to hospitals that reporters could not access, and numerous families had collected bodies privately without media contact.

At least 354 more people were arrested in the last 36 hours till 6:00pm on July 30, bringing the total number of arrests to 10,488 since July 18. Police filed 672 cases in the capital and 51 districts. Of the latest arrestees, 215 were taken into custody from 29 districts. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police produced 139 arrestees before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate’s Court, where most were sent to jail and some placed on remand.

Prominent citizens, under the banner “Aggrieved Citizen Society,” held a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters Unity, accusing the government of being largely responsible for the deadly crackdown. Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman questioned the justification for holding protest leaders “for their safety” and asked if similar security would be extended to all citizens.

Meanwhile, police barred a group of guardians under the banner “Santaner Pashe Obhibhabok” from holding a sit-in in front of Dhaka Medical College. The parents had planned to demand answers regarding the deaths of their children.

The government announced its intention to ban Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing, Islami Chhatra Shibir, for their alleged involvement in recent “anti-state activities.” Law Minister Anisul Huq made the announcement a day after the Awami League-led 14-party alliance recommended the ban. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir questioned the timing of the decision, calling it a ploy to distract from the ongoing crisis.

Amnesty International, in an open letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, demanded the immediate lifting of the curfew and restoration of full access to social media. The letter also urged the government to ensure that shoot-on-sight orders and internet shutdowns would not be used again to suppress protests or curtail fundamental rights.

The events of July 30 bore witness to a fractured nation grappling with grief, fury, and a deepening crisis of trust. While red became the colour of resistance—on campus, online, and on the streets—the government’s escalating crackdown and denial of responsibility further inflamed public sentiment. As the international community watched with alarm and citizens demanded justice with unrelenting courage, the question remained—will the state listen before the damage becomes irreversible?

Woman’s body found 2 days after she fell into open drain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Firefighters yesterday recovered the body of a woman who had fallen into an open drain in Tongi, Gazipur, two days ago.

The deceased was identified as Faria Tasnim Jyoti, 32, daughter of late Oliullah Ahmed Bablu of Baganpara village in Chuadanga Sadar upazila.

She used to live in Mirpur and work as a sales manager at a money trading corporation.

“The drain into which Faria fell flows into the Shalikhura Beel. While conducting a search operation there, her body was found under a pile of water hyacinth around 9:15am,” said Shahin Alam, an official of the Tongi Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Faria had gone missing after falling into an uncovered portion of the drain that runs along the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

The incident occurred around 9:00pm on Sunday in front of Dhaka Imperial Hospital in the Hossain Market area of Tongi.

Fire service divers launched a rescue operation immediately after she went missing.

The victim’s cousin, Oishee, said, “On Sunday, Jyoti went to see a doctor at Dhaka Imperial Hospital in Tongi. That night, I found out through Facebook and several TV channels that a woman had fallen into an open drain in that area.

“When our family tried to contact her on her phone, it was found switched off. After looking for her everywhere, I went to the Hossain Market and found out that it was Jyoti who had fallen into the drain.”

Following the incident, locals accused the Gazipur City Corporation of negligence, saying that a portion of the drain in the Hossain Market area had been left uncovered for some time and that no warning signs had been placed nearby to alert pedestrians.

On Monday, a probe committee formed in the wake of the tragic death of six-month-old Seherish, who fell into the Hijra canal in Chattogram city’s Kapasgola area on April 18, identified mismanagement by utility service agencies, gross negligence, and long-standing coordination failures among relevant authorities, among several other reasons, as the causes of the incident.

On July 9, a three-year-old girl fell into an open drain in the port city’s Halishahar area and died of drowning.

At least 15 people have lost their lives after falling into open drains or canals in Chattogram city over the past six years, especially during the rainy season.



A movement that united campuses and classrooms

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of freedom fighters, asked, “If the grandchildren of freedom fighters do not receive benefits, should the grandchildren of razakars receive them instead?”

The reference to “razakars” — a term historically used to describe collaborators with the Pakistani army during the 1971 Liberation War — sparked immediate outrage among students.

As protests intensified, so did the violence. Videos of students being beaten by Bangladesh Chhatra League activists flooded social media.

Then, on July 16, Abu Sayed, a student of Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur, was shot dead by police.

That night, the University Grants Commission shut down all public and private universities, medical colleges, and affiliated institutions, citing student safety.

Public university dormitories were evacuated, seemingly to deflate the movement’s momentum. For a moment, it seemed the protests might end.

But then, a new wave rose when private university students stepped in. College and even school students joined.

According to the official government gazette, the list of martyrs includes 844 names. An analysis by profession and age, based on information from families, shows that at least 269 students lost their lives — second only to working-class people, according to a Prothom Alo report.

THE MOBILISATION

Private university students were among

the first to mobilise; not over quotas, but out of collective outrage.

Jabed Bin Noor of South East University said, “When my friend from Dhaka University was attacked on July 14 for a fair demand, it affected me. That’s why we initiated our protest the next day.”

He described the unity among people from all walks of life. “We all arrived at one truth: our adversary is this government. Its fall is the only path towards our hopes.”

For Hasibul Hasan Shanto of North South University, the protest was personal. “I’ve questioned the government since school.... I even resigned from a law enforcement job after seeing how it was used to rig the 2018 election.... When the prime minister called us ‘razakar’, that was the moment I knew I had to act. This wasn’t about institutions; it was about doing what’s right.... This was a landmark movement.... People are loyal to the state. It’s the politicians who drag it into the ditch.”

RESISTANCE IN THE DISTRICTS

Students outside Dhaka — from private universities, colleges, schools — kept joining, even as crackdowns continued.

Kousik Islam Apurbo, an HSC candidate from Rajshahi Shikkha Board Govt Model School and College, said, “When violence broke out on August 5 [the day the AL-led government fell], police fired tear gas and sound grenades. I raised both hands and screamed that we won’t run. But then they fired live bullets. One hit my foot. As I bled, a protester with a stomach wound tried to carry me. That was the beauty of July — no one left

anyone behind.”

But as their injuries slowed them, more attacks came.

“They beat me, fractured my jaw, stole my phone. Two Varendra students died but they weren’t remembered. Public university martyrs got the cameras. It’s all about footage,” Apurbo said.

Md Abdul Bari from Rajshahi College said most protesters were not from public universities. “Once Rajshahi University’s dorms shut on July 18, participation dropped. Then it was private university, school, college, madrasa, nursing and polytechnic students who carried it forward.

“We hid in Padma Garden, lived on mashed potatoes and rice. We broke Section 144 in Rajshahi. That was our strength.”

He also highlighted the role of girls. “They weren’t from DU or RU. They were nursing and polytechnic students, and they were brave.”

Shahana Islam, a 10th grader from Jhenidah Wazir Ali School and College, joined with her brother. “When our senior classmates were attacked on campus on July 16, we couldn’t stay silent. It wasn’t only about quotas. It was about Chhatra League’s brutality. Our first protest was against the attackers and then it became much bigger. We bled together.”

In Dhaka, students from Dhaka College coordinated protests with private university students.

Tanvir Hasan Tushar joined the demo at Naya Bazar.

“Though I’m from Dhaka College, I lived with friends from private universities. We fixed two spots —

Naya Bazar and Rampura. Students from United International University, Daffodil, North South and others joined us.

“When we heard about the BRAC University attack, we changed direction. Near Ring Road, police fired tear gas and chased us. A bullet hit my ear, pierced my hand — and damaged my eye. Now I have partial blindness.”

Despite his injury, Tushar remains determined. “I’ve accepted it. But I’m working to stand on my own feet again.”

WHEN MADRASAS STUDENTS JOINED Often sidelined in student politics, madrasa students took an early stand.

Aminul Islam of Darussunnah Kamil Madrasah in Narayanganj recalled starting protests with just 15–20 students.

“After Abu Sayed was killed on July 16, momentum grew. On July 18, police fired on our procession. Many female protesters were injured. It was terrifying.

“Whether I benefit from this movement was not my concern. If it failed, my future children might face the same discrimination. That’s why we joined.”

Hafez Abdullah from Rajshahi, a former Jatrabari Madrasa student, believed the timing was divine. “The movement began in Muharram. That month has always marked the fall of tyrants. I believed it was symbolic.

“I wore a beard and tupi. Back then, that meant being labelled Shibir. We stopped wearing our uniforms.”

His roots in resistance ran deep. “In 2013, we saw our brothers martyred. Every time the chance came — we rose.”

Bangladesh must now come together to build a democratic nation.

“I want to put special emphasis on the word ‘democratic’. I truly believe that democracy, as a system, has the ability to gradually solve our problems. Of course, the solutions will not come overnight. There won’t be any sudden miracle. But I strongly believe that real change will come through a democratic process.”

He also said political parties have already reached consensus on 12 core issues, and that the remaining issues can be solved by the next elected government through political will and commitment.

Meanwhile, Jamaat Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman said he does not see any visible progress in the trial of the heinous crimes committed by the Awami League regime.

“Please do whatever is needed for justice,” he said, adding that it has to be done without flaws.

He called for preparing a full list of those martyred during the July uprising and their recognition.

Shafiqur said conducting an election without holding trials for the July perpetrators will result in a “disaster”. He also called for an impartial judiciary.

Russia jails journo for 12 years for volunteering for Navalny

AFP, Moscow

Russia jailed for 12 years a journalist and former volunteer for late opposition activist Alexey Navalny yesterday, as Moscow outlaws any cooperation with Navalny’s organisations — even in the past.

Olga Komleva, 46, previously volunteered for Navalny’s party, before it was banned as “extremist” in 2021, according to independent media outlet Mediazona.

She was also found guilty of criticising the Russian army as she covered Russia’s offensive in Ukraine and anti-government protests for an independent outlet RusNews.

The Kremlin has escalated its decade-long clampdown on independent media amid its campaign in Ukraine by imposing sweeping censorship laws, effectively banning any criticism of the military.

A district court in the central

Russian city of Ufa “found that the defendant participated in the activities of an extremist community” and “spread deliberately false information about the actions of the armed forces,” it said in a statement.

“The court found the defendant guilty and sentenced her to 12 years in prison,” it added.

The journalist did not admit guilt on either charge.

Komleva was seen smiling and waving from inside a glass defendants’ box after she heard the verdict, and said “I love you all” to a group of people who came to support her, according to a video published by RusNews.

Komleva has diabetes and struggled to receive medication while in pre-trial detention, Mediazona said.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin’s main opponent who died in an Arctic penal colony under unclear circumstances last year, was declared an “extremist” by Russian authorities in 2021.

July Charter runs into a snag

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chairman Tarique Rahman. A Standing Committee member said, “We support state recognition, but not constitutional status, for the July Charter and the July Declaration.”

They argued that while the 2024 uprising marked the end of an authoritarian regime, it did not constitute a new independence. “The country already gained independence in 1971,” said another member of the committee.

Several members warned that granting the 2024 events constitutional status could lead to “confusion and political controversy” and even calls to similarly recognise other uprisings like the 1990 anti-Ershad movement.

One BNP leader pointed out: “Even the 1971 Proclamation of Independence wasn’t added to the constitution until 2011. And that move faced legal challenges.”

As such, the BNP decided to continue discussions on the July Charter but not on the July Declaration. “We are sincere about democratic reforms and therefore remain open to dialogue on the July Charter,” said a standing committee member.

Jamaat Nayebe-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher said, “In some parts, it [draft] is also dangerous. If this is merely a sample, it requires no comment. But if this is the final one, we cannot accept it.”

He was talking to reporters during a break at yesterday’s consensus talks at the Foreign Service Academy.

To ensure the charter’s legitimacy, he proposed two legal pathways for implementation: an ordinance ratified by parliament or a national referendum.

Taher added that Jamaat would soon submit its own draft to the commission.

The NCP demanded that the agreed-

upon reforms must be given legal recognition before the upcoming general election. “Consensus reached must be codified into law, and the polls must be held accordingly,” said Joint Convener Javed Rasin.

Criticising the commission, he said, “The draft was published without adequate discussion. Imposing any text unilaterally is not acceptable to us. NCP is willing to submit its position in writing.”

NCP Member Secretary Akhtar Hossen proposed issuing a Legal Framework Order to legitimise the charter and ensure its implementation regardless of which party forms future governments.

He suggested that if a constituent assembly is elected, it could incorporate the reforms into the constitution and enact laws preventing future contradictions.

He added that a formal party statement would soon be submitted to the commission and later presented to the media.

Islami Andolon Bangladesh criticised the draft for “being weak, lenient toward a fallen autocracy, and lacking enforceability”.

Secretary General Yunus Ahmad said the document failed to name Sheikh Hasina, “the chief architect of the fallen fascism”, despite her alleged role in the July brutality.

“The language fails to reflect the cruelty, horror, and misrule,” he said, calling for more direct condemnation and legal binding.

Ganosambhati Andolon Executive Coordinator Abul Hasan Rubel said they feel some of the words and language used in the charter need further refinement. Additionally, there are some points they believe should be included.