

## ‘Tk 1 lakh offered’ as hush money for rape of child

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox’s Bazar

A 14-year-old girl and her family fled their home on Cox’s Bazar’s Saint Martin’s Island on Friday, after local political figures, allegedly of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, offered Tk 1 lakh to silence them over the rape of the teenager.

The alleged rapist, Abdullah, 35, is reportedly the brother of Jamaat-e-Islami’s former union ameer and the current Cox’s Bazar committee member Abdur Rahim Jihadi.

According to the victim’s mother, her daughter had gone out that afternoon when Abdullah lured her into his home and raped her. “She came home crying and told me everything. Later, some local leaders offered Tk 1 lakh to keep us quiet. When we refused, we started receiving threats.”

The family, now in hiding, is trying to secure treatment for the girl.

Locals said a group of “community elders”, including local BNP union president Nurul Alam, held an informal arbitration and proposed a Tk 1 lakh settlement.

Nurul Alam denied the allegation, saying, “The claim of a cover-up with money is not true. I’ve been trying to offer legal support. When the family came to me, I asked if they had any witnesses. When they said no, I suggested they go to the police.”

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## ON THIS DAY LAST YEAR

# A nation united under one demand

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prime minister and her entire cabinet. What began as a decentralised uprising led by students evolved into a mass mobilisation, pulling together people from all segments of society in a powerful demonstration of unity and defiance.

From early morning, thousands began converging on the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, many of them braving rain with family members, waving national flags, and holding placards bearing the faces of the dead, the disappeared, and slogans of resistance. The surrounding areas, Doyel Chattar, Jagannath Hall, Dhaka Medical College Hospital, and Shibbari intersection, overflowed with protesters as chants of “Dofa Ek, Dabi Ek: Sheikh Hasinar Podotyag” echoed through the streets. The rally, which formally began at 5:00pm, soon swelled to tens of thousands, bringing together teachers, lawyers, garment workers, parents, rickshaw pullers, and children.

In the midst of this crowd, Nahid Islam, a key organiser of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, took the stage and declared, “We are here with a one-point demand. We seek to ensure people’s safety and justice.”

The protest sites extended far beyond the boundaries of the Shaheed Minar.

In Mirpur-10, thousands of students and citizens blocked the roundabout. In Uttara, students and parents stood shoulder to shoulder near BNS Centre, carrying placards like “My brother is in the grave, why is the killer outside?” and “Police, whose side are you on?”

Meanwhile, Dhaka College students blocked Mirpur Road at Science Lab, vowing to stay until the one-point demand was fulfilled. The day’s procession was peaceful in the capital, with security forces largely maintaining distance.

However, clashes erupted in at least seven districts, including Gazipur,



FILE PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

Braving the rain, thousands pour into the Central Shaheed Minar and surrounding streets on August 3, 2024, to join the anti-discrimination student movement.

Chattogram, Cumilla, Sylhet, Bogura, Jamalpur, and Faridpur, where police and ruling party activists allegedly opened fire on demonstrators. Two people were killed, and at least 55 others were injured.

Earlier that morning, Sheikh Hasina addressed members of the Professionals’ Coordination Council at Gono Bhaban, stating, “The Gono Bhaban’s doors are open. I want to sit with the agitating students and listen to them. I don’t want any conflict.”

She called for the release of detained students and pledged that trials would be held for each person killed in the protests. But her appeal fell flat. Organisers and demonstrators alike viewed the gesture as too little, too late.

Adding to the momentum, the Students Against Discrimination released a 15-point directive to enforce the non-cooperation movement.

These included calls to halt tax and utility bill payments, shut down educational institutions, courts, mills,

and factories, and boycott all state-run seminars, events, and institutions.

They also called for suspending remittances through formal banking channels, offshore transactions, and transport services, while making exceptions for hospitals, emergency services, and daily essentials. The movement sought full nationwide shutdowns without economic collapse by allowing workers to claim salaries while refusing cooperation with the state.

In response to the growing tension, Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman issued a directive to ensure the protection of lives, property, and vital state institutions. He emphasised that the Bangladesh Army had always stood by the people and would continue to do so in times of need.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir released a statement demanding the government step down without further bloodshed.

## Made with US cotton? Pay less at US customs

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remaining 60 percent of product value, further reducing the effective duty paid at the US border.

Khan urged the government to support increased imports of US cotton and to deepen bilateral discussions to ensure the new trade provision is fully leveraged. He also encouraged investment in systems that could certify and document US input use throughout the supply chain.

The Trump administration reduced the tariff rate on Bangladeshi goods to 20 percent from the previous 35 percent, a move Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus described as “a decisive diplomatic victory” for the country. However, the effective tariff rate stands at about 36.5 percent with existing duties taken into account. While still substantial, the new content clause provides a mechanism to lower the burden.

Bangladesh’s position could strengthen further as other apparel-exporting countries, such as India and Pakistan, are less likely to benefit due to their use of domestically grown cotton. Vietnam faces an additional risk: if goods are deemed transhipped, the US may apply tariffs as high as 40 percent.

Khan said shifting orders from China, where tariffs remain elevated, could also benefit Bangladesh. However, he warned of a downside risk: rising tariffs on consumer goods may fuel inflation in the US, potentially reducing American demand for imported garments.

As US importers are expected to bear the bulk of the new tariff costs, Khan cautioned that some buyers may seek to shift part of the burden onto Bangladeshi suppliers. “It’s important that we remain competitive, but also that we don’t absorb more cost than we can afford,” he said.

## ‘Manifesto for a new Bangladesh’

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the busy capital, but has urged city residents to view the matter with understanding.

Meanwhile, Dhaka police have urged city dwellers, particularly HSC, equivalent, and BCS examinees, to leave for their exam centres well ahead of time to avoid delays.

## CA may unveil polls monthon Aug 5 or 8

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Coming out of the meeting, Mostofa Jamal Haider, leader of the 12-Party Alliance and chairman of Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar), said, “The chief adviser categorically said he would announce a specific timeline and date of the election within the next four to five days.”

On July 9, Yunus instructed the authorities concerned to complete election preparations by December. During a meeting with law enforcement officials that day, he also reiterated that the polls may be held in February or April.

Earlier, on June 13, during a meeting in London with BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman, the chief adviser said the election could take place before Ramadan 2026, which begins in the third week of February.

### JULY DECLARATION

Meanwhile, in a statement yesterday, the Chief Adviser’s Press Wing said the government will formally present the “July Declaration” to the nation on August 5 in the presence of all stakeholders of the 2024 mass uprising.

The announcement will be made at 5:00pm, it said, adding that more details regarding the announcement

will be provided shortly.

Information and Broadcasting Adviser Mahfuj Alam also confirmed the development on his verified Facebook page, writing: “The July Declaration is now a reality... I thank everyone for keeping this issue alive in the public consciousness and helping pave the way for its implementation.”

The student protests, which began on July 1 last year against the quota system in government jobs, quickly escalated into an uprising that toppled the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5.

According to a report of the UN fact-finding mission in February, up to 1,400 protest-related deaths occurred between July 15 and August 5.

The government is drafting the “July Declaration” in consultation with political parties after it took on this responsibility last December amid protests by Students Against Discrimination (SAD).

Samanta Shermeen, senior joint convener of the National Citizen Party, said yesterday they would not announce a separate July Declaration since the government is preparing to release it.

NCP Convener Nahid Islam yesterday welcomed the move.

## US deports 39 Bangladeshis

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Desk arranged food for them.

Speaking on the matter, Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC’s Migration Programme and Youth Platform, said, “We’ve learnt that the deportees spent somewhere between Tk 30 lakh and Tk 40 lakh to reach the US illegally, sometimes travelling through Mexico or various South American countries.

“Many sold their homes to arrange that fund. This put them in huge debt.”

“After reaching the US, they

had applied for asylum, but both the courts and the immigration authorities rejected their application. Later, the US administration decided to deport them,” he added.

Soon after Trump took office for the second term earlier this year, the US began a crackdown against illegal immigrants, mainly from South America. Many Indian immigrants have been also deported.

As part of that crackdown, Washington in March wrote a letter to Dhaka, seeking support in the repatriation of undocumented

“We have learned from the government side that the July Declaration will be announced on August 5... We welcome this initiative,” he said at a press conference at the party office in Banglamotor.

On December 29 last year, SAD and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee announced plans to proclaim the July Uprising Declaration at the Central Shaheed Minar on December 31, sparking debate over its timing and impact.

Later that day, the chief adviser’s press secretary clarified it was a private initiative, not endorsed by the government. However, the following night, the Chief Adviser’s Press Wing said the government would pursue a proclamation based on national consensus.

In response, the two platforms called off their declaration and held a “March for Unity” instead, where student leaders gave the government a January 15 deadline.

As the movement reignited with demands to ban the Awami League and announce the declaration, the advisory council decided on May 10 to release it within 30 working days. In mid-July, the draft was sent to pro-uprising parties for feedback before finalisation.

Bangladeshis.

A diplomatic source based in New York said yesterday that it was not unusual for US immigration authorities to deport undocumented immigrants.

“However, when deportations are done frequently, it makes the news.”

“Although it’s true that the Trump administration is strictly enforcing its immigration laws, its main target is illegal immigrants from Latin America. There are not many undocumented Bangladeshis in the US,” he added.

## Interim govt echoes AL fascism

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The former Jahangirnagar professor said the interim government has spent its first year breaking every expectation of the July uprising.

“We understood that this government couldn’t do much, and we didn’t expect an overnight change. But we did expect the beginning of change – something that never happened.”

Regarding mob violence, Anu Muhammad said, “Mobs have destroyed homes and attacked various institutions. They have been used as a mercenary force by certain individuals to install some people and remove others.”

He said, “We wouldn’t have blamed the government for these events had we seen genuine efforts to stop them. Instead, we see that some within

the government are attempting to rationalise mob violence.”

Anu Muhammad criticised the government’s “secret deal” struck with the US to reduce retaliatory tariffs and the decision to purchase 25 Boeing aircraft from the US.

He dismissed the anti-India sentiment expressed by the government and its allies as “rhetoric,” arguing that they should instead reveal and cancel the many harmful and unequal deals signed with India.

Prof Anu Muhammad emphasised that all past struggles of the Bangladeshi people deserve recognition, with the 1971 Liberation War held above all as the defining moment in the nation’s history.

“Those who seek to diminish the importance of the Liberation War

are adversaries of the spirit of mass uprising. The Liberation War does not belong to the Awami League. It must be reclaimed and given back to the people, whose sacrifices gave it meaning.”

Alleging that the July movement has been exploited by a new type of extortionist, communal, religious, and fascist forces, Anu Muhammad asserted that the movement must be reclaimed by the people.

“The uprising belongs to no single entity – it is owned by the people.”

Anu Muhammad also called for an end to the ongoing mass arrests, extortion, mob violence, and indiscriminate case filings.

The state must assume full responsibility for the martyrs and injured in last year’s uprising across Bangladesh, he added.

## Road crash in Malaysia kills three Bangladeshis

UNB, Dhaka

Three Bangladeshis were killed and two others injured after the vehicle they were travelling in skidded off East Coast Highway (LPT) 1 near Kuantan, Malaysia, yesterday.

The victims were driver Sabber Hasan, 30, and passengers Jahid Hasan, 21, and Abdullah, 24.

Acting Kuantan Police Chief Adli Mat Daud said an initial investigation

revealed that the group was travelling from Kuantan to Kuala Lumpur when the driver reportedly lost control of the multi-purpose vehicle, causing it to veer off the left side of the road.

The two injured were hospitalised, the police officer said in a statement.

Adli further said preliminary findings showed that the driver did not have a valid driving licence and that the vehicle’s road tax had expired in May.

## US envoy meets Israeli hostage families in Tel Aviv

AFP, Tel Aviv

US envoy Steve Witkoff met anguished relatives of Israeli hostages still held in Gaza yesterday, as fears for the captives’ survival mounted almost 22 months into the war sparked by Hamas’s October 2023 attack.

Witkoff was greeted with some applause and pleas for assistance from hundreds of protesters gathered in Tel Aviv, before going into a closed meeting with the families.

The Hostages and Missing Families Forum confirmed the meeting was underway and videos shared online showed Witkoff arriving as families chanted “Bring them home!” and “We need your help.”

The visit came one day after Witkoff visited a US-backed aid station in Gaza, to inspect efforts to get food into the devastated Palestinian territory.

Yotam Cohen, brother of 21-year-old hostage Nimrod Cohen, told AFP:

“The war needs to end. The Israeli government will not end it willingly. It has refused to do so.

“The Israeli government must be stopped. For our sakes, for our soldiers’ sakes, for our hostages’ sakes, for our sons and for the future generations of everybody in the Middle East.”

Of the 251 hostages taken during the Hamas attack, 49 are still being held in Gaza, including 27 the Israeli military says are dead.

After the meeting, the Forum released a statement saying that Witkoff had given them a personal commitment that he and US President Donald Trump would work to return the remaining hostages.

- ‘Horrible acts’ -

Hamas attempted to maintain pressure on the families, releasing a video of one of the hostages – 24-year-old Evyatar David – for the second time in two days, showing him looking emaciated in a tunnel.

## Dhaka roads to avoid today

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Shahbagh intersection from noon to 6:00pm to mark the first anniversary of the July-August uprising.

Meanwhile, from 3:00pm to 6:00pm, the National Citizen Party (NCP) will hold a public rally at the Shaheed Minar, demanding the implementation of their “July Declaration and Charter”.

Additionally, the “July Jagaran” cultural festival by Saimum Shilpigosthi is being held at Suhrawardy Udyan every day from August 1 to 4, from 10:00am to 10:00pm.

DMP also noted that Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent exams, along with the BCS examination, will take place at different centres in the city on the same day.

Given the multiple overlapping events, DMP warned of severe traffic disruptions near Shahbagh, Shaheed Minar, and Suhrawardy Udyan areas, and advised commuters – especially

examinees – to plan their travel well in advance.

It also recommended using alternative routes and diversion points.

Suggested diversion routes are:

Vehicles coming from the north via Sonargaon or Banglamotor crossings should avoid heading straight towards Shahbagh. Instead, they should turn left and use Hare Road or Minto Road.

Vehicles approaching from the west via Science Lab Crossing should avoid Shahbagh by turning towards Nilkhet/Palashi or towards Sonargaon Road (Hatirpool) and then use the Banglamotor link road.

Vehicles coming from High Court or Kadam Fountain Crossing should avoid Shahbagh and continue straight on Hare Road or Shaheed Captain Monsur Ali Sarani (Moghbar Road).

Similarly, vehicles approaching from the north via Kakrail Mosque Crossing should continue straight towards Gulistan.

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