

The deadliest day of the uprising

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August 4, 2024 marked the deadliest day of Bangladesh's student-led uprising, as the non-cooperation movement entered an explosive new phase.

What began with an eerie calm quickly unraveled into chaos, bloodshed, and widespread violence in at least twenty districts.

Protesters, police, and ruling party activists clashed across the country, leaving at least 93 people dead and over a thousand injured, many with bullet wounds. The day's toll pushed protest-related deaths since mid-July past 300.

In the morning, calm prevailed nationwide -- but it was short-lived.

Violence erupted after Awami League supporters took to the streets to suppress anti-government protests.

In Sirajganj, a mob attacked a police station and beat 13 police personnel to death. Five more died in nearby Raiganj upazila, making it the deadliest district that day.

Meanwhile, Dhaka turned into a battleground. Protesters and AL men clashed in Farmgate, Dhanmondi, Mirpur-10, Uttara, Shahbagh, and Gulistan. In Farmgate, police and AL men fired on a massive crowd advancing with sticks and traffic barriers. Protesters retaliated with brickbats.

In Dhanmondi, a fierce clash broke out near the AL office around 12:30pm. Gunshots and stun grenades shook the neighbourhood. At Shahbagh, tensions ran high as violence spilled into the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University premises. At least 24 vehicles were torched there.

In Mirpur-10, protesters were met by armed AL men and police, and the area



THE JULY THAT ROCKED BANGLADESH

AUGUST 4, 2024



Hundreds of protesters swarmed the Shahbagh intersection in the capital on August 4, 2024, where a fierce clash later broke out between them and ruling party supporters on the first day of the nationwide non-cooperation movement announced by the Students Against Discrimination. FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

echoed with gunfire. In Old Dhaka, clashes at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court saw over a hundred protesters and pro-BNP lawyers storm the premises, throwing bricks and damaging police vehicles.

Outside Dhaka, deadly clashes erupted in Lalmipur, Narsingdi, Feni, Rangpur, Sylhet, Bogura, Pabna, Munshiganj, Magura, Kishoreganj, Cumilla, Chattogram, Faridpur, and Khulna.

Protesters were beaten or shot; government offices and vehicles were torched. In Chattogram alone, 172 people with gunshot wounds were hospitalised. AL offices were vandalised in multiple districts.

Amid the bloodshed, students advanced their "March to Dhaka" programme to August 5. At 3:00pm, organiser Nahid Islam addressed a

Shahbagh crowd, accusing the ruling party of trying to incite civil war. He urged citizens to form resistance committees and continue sit-ins until the government resigned.

Demonstrators later attempted to march with slain protesters' bodies, but were dispersed by police.

Meanwhile, then prime minister Sheikh Hasina called the protesters criminals, not students. Her office urged parents to pull students from the streets, citing "militant threats."

A High Court observation stated that law enforcers could use rubber bullets and tear gas, and only then live ammunition -- in cases of legal violations or riots. Live fire was otherwise forbidden.

At RAOWA Club, retired army officers demanded that troops be pulled from the streets and sent back to

their barracks.

At Dhaka Reporters Unity, the University Teachers' Network proposed an interim government of teachers, lawyers, and civil society leaders -- elected with student help -- to replace the Hasina government. The proposal was announced by Prof Anu Muhammad.

The BNP formally endorsed the student demand. Speaking at the party chairperson's Gulshan office, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir called on the government to resign, declaring national support for the one-point demand: Sheikh Hasina's resignation.

By evening, the government suspended 4G internet, blocked Facebook and WhatsApp, and extended the curfew indefinitely across Dhaka and all major administrative areas.

NCP vows second republic

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embarking on a new journey for the state, our first pledge is to adopt a new constitution through a constituent assembly," the manifesto stated.

It said the new constitution would abolish dictatorship, dynastic rule, and fascist structures, and establish a discrimination-free, democratic, inclusive Second Republic oriented toward public welfare. It would ensure the separation and balance of powers among the executive, legislative, and judiciary, and grant constitutional recognition to the July Declaration and the July Charter.

"Our new state will protect the life, livelihood, dignity, and rights of every individual."

The party, born out of the July uprising that toppled the Hasina regime last year, pledged full state recognition for the July martyrs, proper medical treatment and rehabilitation for the injured, and lifelong support for them.

"We will ensure exemplary trials and punishment for all crimes against humanity committed during the era of Awami fascism -- including the genocide of July, the Shapla massacre, the BDR killings, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings," the manifesto said.

"To honour the spirit of national unity in July and the supreme sacrifice of thousands of martyrs, we will preserve the memory of July and will always stand beside our comrades in the struggle against fascism."

The manifesto outlines sweeping reforms, starting with the restructuring of democratic and state institutions, ensuring a justice system based on fairness and legal reform, building a service-oriented and corruption-free administration, and establishing a people friendly law enforcement system.

It also emphasises the need for village parliaments and stronger local governance, along with a free media and

an active civil society.

Other key priorities include universal healthcare, a nation-building education policy, investment in research, innovation and a digital revolution, and upholding the dignity of religion, minority communities and ethnic identities.

It also commits to women's safety, rights and empowerment, along with a human-centred and welfare-driven economy.

For the youth, the party promises greater employment opportunities, a multi-dimensional policy for trade and industrialisation, sustainable agriculture, and food sovereignty.

The manifesto also pledges to uphold the rights of workers and farmers, ensure sustainable management of national resources, and promote planned urbanisation, transport and housing.

In addition, it includes commitments to climate resilience and the protection of rivers and the sea, safeguarding the rights and dignity of Bangladeshi migrants abroad, adopting a foreign policy rooted in national interest, and developing a comprehensive national defence strategy.

Regarding the manifesto, NCP Convener Nahid said, "We dream of a new Bangladesh -- where every citizen can live with dignity, justice, security, and hope."

"These 24 points are not just promises, but commitments that can lead us toward a democratic, inclusive, and sovereign future," he added.

The NCP organised the rally demanding that the July Charter containing the reform proposals agreed upon by political parties be issued by August 5 and made legally binding.

A podium was set up at the centre of the venue, with hundreds of chairs on both sides where family members of the July martyrs and injured took their seats.

Central leaders sat on a red carpet laid out on the podium. Six large screens

were installed at the venue, where the programme began at 5:00pm.

Leaders and activists streamed into the venue in small processions, carrying the national flag, festoons, and banners. By 3:30pm, a steady crowd had gathered.

Speaking at the event, NCP Member Secretary Akhter Hossen said the new generation that emerged from the July uprising would tackle any national crisis even at the cost of their lives.

"We want a state system where every public representative -- from the prime minister to union members -- must be accountable to the people," he said.

He stressed the need for freeing the judiciary and administration from political influence and ensuring transparent policymaking on public interest.

Akhter also urged constitutional recognition of the July Charter through a legal framework order and called on the interim government to implement key reforms.

NCP Chief Coordinator Nasir Uddin Patwari said Bangladesh must reject "subservient foreign policy" and unite with the oppressed people globally, with a vow to lead regional peace efforts.

Chief Coordinator (South) Hasnat Abdullah said no threat can stop the movement, warning that any harassment of NCP activists will be dealt with politically.

He urged party members to be ready to give their lives, if necessary, to implement the directives of the party's convener and member secretary.

Chief Coordinator (North) Sarjis Alam said, "NCP's struggle will not stop until the Mujibist constitution is dismantled, a new constitution is established, and justice is served for the blood of the martyrs."

Other speakers included NCP leaders Tasnim Jara, Ariful Islam Adib, Nahida Sarwar Niva, Abdul Hannan Masud, Anik Roy, and Nizam Uddin.

Addressing the students, Tarique said that if his party is voted to power in the next polls, it will carry out reforms in the education sector.

"From the school level, the curriculum will include sports, arts, culture, and technical education. The government will help students set up small industries," he added.

As thousands of leaders and activists from Dhaka and nearby districts gathered at Shahbagh, the area from Katabon to Matsya Bhawan and parts of Dhaka University campus became packed with party members.

Tarique said, "....change will surely come in this country. And students will lead that change. In all the great movements in our history, youth were at the centre. And this time it will be the same. Every activist of Chhatra Dal will be a voice for the people, a protester against oppression and injustice."

Tarique said the BNP wants to start a politics of kindness and humanity in the coming days, urging students and the young generation to stay alert and play an active and responsible role in resisting fascism, extremism, and radicalism in the days ahead.

The BNP leader said that in a Bangladesh free from fascism, there should be a qualitative change in traditional student politics.

Presenting his party's various

plans and programmes to the younger generation, Tarique said that BNP wants to build Bangladesh with the united efforts of both the young and the old.

Speaking as a special guest, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said Tarique Rahman, during a meeting with the chief adviser in London, suggested that the next election should be held in February.

The people of Bangladesh are waiting for that election. And before that, they are eagerly waiting for Tarique Rahman's return.

"He [Tarique] will come, will lead us, will show us the way."

Chaired by JCD President Rakibul Islam Rakib and moderated by General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir, the rally was addressed by BNP Vice Chairman Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Asaduzzaman Ripon, Chairperson's Advisory Council Member Aman Ullah Aman, Joint Secretary General Khairul Kabir Khokon, Habib-un-Nabi Khan Sohel, and Shahid Chowdhury Annie, among others.

Demanding that the government announce the election date immediately, the BNP leaders said the party will not tolerate any delay or conspiracy regarding the February polls, and warned that they will take to the streets if there is any kind of obstruction to the path to election.

Out of around 13 crore voters in the country right now, about four crore new voters have been added to the voter list over the last one and a half decades. Even though you became voters, the fascist group took away your right to vote. With the national election ahead, there is a big chance for you to reclaim your voting rights."

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