

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

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 Laxmipur, 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



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

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 RAOVA 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 Fakhru 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.

Five sent to jail for raping woman after restraining husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kustia

A Kustia court sent five people to jail early yesterday on charges of raping a woman after restraining and beating her husband in Bheramara upazila late Saturday night.

The District Judicial Magistrate passed the jail order after police produced the five accused before the court yesterday afternoon, said Abdur Rob Talukder, officer-in-charge of Bheramara Police Station.

The accused are: Kalu Pramanik, 46; Murshid Sheikh, 45; Titu Mondal, alias Tipu, 42; Ejazul, 42; and van driver Rubel Ali, 24. All are residents of Bheramara upazila.

Police arrested them from different parts of the upazila earlier yesterday.

After receiving a call on national emergency hotline 999, a joint team of Bheramara police and Kustia's Detective Branch conducted overnight raids and arrested them, said Kustia police in a press release.

The incident took place around 11:00pm Saturday in the Baro Mile area, when the couple was returning home after work on a rickshaw van.

According to police, the group intercepted the van near a litchi orchard and beat up the husband. They then restrained him, while 3-4 of them dragged the woman into the orchard and raped her.

Kustia Superintendent of Police Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star, "We got a 999 call where a woman claimed she had been raped. Based on her complaint, we arrested five individuals."

The woman is currently undergoing medical treatment.

Additional SP Foisal Ahmed said a case has been filed against the arrestees under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000.

OC Abdur Rob said the court sent them to jail after recording their confessional statement under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Proclaim second republic

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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 "subversive 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.

'Let your first vote be for sheaf of paddy'

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conflict, and revenge, but qualitative change from the political parties.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), a BNP-affiliated student organisation, organised the rally at Shahbagh, marking the anniversary of the July uprising.

JCD leaders claimed that it was the largest rally since the fall of the Awami League-led government on August 5 last year.

The rally began at 3:20pm with the recitation of the holy Quran, followed by the national anthem.

A tribute was paid to those who were killed during the July uprising and to the Chhatra Dal leaders and activists who were killed over the past 16 years.

During the 35-minute video speech, Tarique urged all those who have been deprived of voting rights for the last one and a half decades to elect BNP in the upcoming election so that the party can implement its vision for a better Bangladesh.

"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."

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 Bhaban 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 Fakhru 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 Uddin Chowdhury Anas, 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.

Hasina's trial begins with a chilling testimony

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Narayanganj's Signboard area and again on August 5 in Dhaka's Jatrabari area, killing two in front of him and injuring many others.

"I want justice. I want that Sheikh Hasina, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, IGP Mamun, Kauwa Quader [Obaidul Quader], and Shamim Osman get punishment for injuring me and killing and wounding thousands of my brothers."

His full statement was recorded by the tribunal and was displayed on screen.

The court proceedings were aired by BTV.

Apart from Hasina, former home minister Kamal, and ex-inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun are the accused in the case.

This is the first case filed over the July atrocities to go into trial at the tribunal.

While Hasina and Kamal are absconding and being tried in absentia, Mamun, who became state witness, was present in the dock.

The three-member tribunal began proceedings at 11:15am with Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman urging justice for what he termed one of the most heinous crimes in the nation's history. Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam followed with an opening statement.

After his statement, a documentary and video clip were screened in the courtroom. The courtroom went silent.

The documentary featured the voices of grief-stricken families of July uprising victims, including Abu Sayed, Mir Mahfuzur Rahman Mughdo, Mahbubur Rahman Shaikat, and Shahriar Khan Anas. A child, holding a photo of her father Tahir Zaman, who was killed during the uprising, says that she is still waiting for him to return with chocolates. She knows that police have taken her father. "I miss you Baba," she said.

Tahir was a freelance journalist. Mamun looked upset as the documentary was being played.

Then came the video clip, raw, and gut-wrenching. It showed a young man lying on the ground, his face bloodied and disfigured, raising both hands in a desperate plea for help.

Someone is heard shouting "Allah save, Allah save".

Moments later, the court announced a 10-minute break.

When proceedings resumed, the man in the video clip, Khokon Chandro, appeared in the witness stand as the first prosecution witness.

In a trembling voice, Khokon described how police dragged him out from behind a barrel under the Jatrabari Flyover and shot him in the

face at point-blank. He lost an eye instantly and the other was damaged. His nose and much of his face were shattered. He spoke of his long and painful treatment process – from local hospitals to a facility in Russia. Despite undergoing multiple plastic surgeries, the scars remain, brutally visible. His voice, once clear, is now barely audible – a lasting reminder of the horror he endured.

Khokon said he joined the student protest on July 18 in Narayanganj and returned home safely. But the next day, while heading to Chashara, he saw a protester was shot in the chest and died instantly. From then on, he joined the protests regularly.

On August 5, protesters were marching towards Dhaka from the Signboard area when police opened fire in Jatrabari, fatally shooting a man in the head. "Blood spurted like an animal was being slaughtered," he said.

According to him, the army later arrived, fired shots in the air, and ordered police to retreat. As protesters chanted slogans, news spread that Hasina resigned. But once the army left, police resumed firing from Jatrabari Police Station.

"After the army left, police came out of the station and began firing at us like birds," he said.

He added that many protesters, including himself, fled and hid behind a pillar of the Jatrabari Flyover. But police chased them there and opened fire, leaving several injured.

"At one point, I took shelter behind a drum under the flyover. A policeman spotted me and aimed at my head from close range. The bullet missed my head but struck my face," he said.

During the cross-examination, Amir Hossain, state-appointed defence lawyer for Hasina and Kamal, questioned how a microbus driver could join protests on working days – July 18-19 and August 5 last year. Khokon replied that no vehicles were operating at the time.

As several prosecutors attempted to assist witness Khokon in responding to questions during the cross-examination, defence counsel Amir objected, saying he would only accept answers directly from the witness. He warned that any interference from the prosecution would make it difficult for him to perform his duties.

At this point, Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, chair of the tribunal, said he would look at the matter.

During the proceedings, the defence pointed to an apparent contradiction between Khokon's testimony and the investigation report. The defence argued that,

while testifying, Khokon stated that one person was killed on July 18 last year, which, the defence said, contradicts the probe report.

In reply, the prosecution referred to a directive from the Supreme Court, noting that a witness's testimony cannot be challenged based solely on the findings of a probe report.

The defence further argued that the victims had been killed when demonstrators allegedly armed with firearms and other weapons attacked police personnel. Khokon denied the claim.

Lawyer Amir also cited specific portions of Khokon's statement, asserting that those parts were untrue. Khokon rejected the allegation.

Earlier, in his opening statement, ICT Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam said Hasina, as the premier and head of the ruling alliance, held absolute authority and made unilateral decisions to preserve her grip on power. "She was the nucleus of these crimes," Tajul said, adding that Kamal and Mamun played key roles in the criminal enterprise.

Over 1,400 unarmed protesters were killed countrywide, he claimed.

Tajul said the actions of the three accused clearly render them liable for crimes against humanity under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, as they held the highest level of command responsibility.

He added that the case rests on direct and overwhelming evidence such as statements made by the then prime minister herself, audio recordings, and explicit directives issued during the turbulent days.

The chief prosecutor read out a portion of the transcribed phone conversation recorded between Hasina and then Dhaka South City mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and said that Hasina instructed law enforcement agencies to open fire.

According to the transcribe version, Hasina informed Taposh that she had already consulted the army chief and that operations were underway, including drone and helicopter surveillance. Taposh suggested making arrests based on aerial footage, to which Hasina responded that she had already ordered mass arrests for that night, directing Rab, DGFI, and NSI to detain as many people as possible.

Tajul said the prosecution will present 11 emblematic incidents that will show how the attacks were widespread, systematic, and planned with precision. "The tribunal will see evidence of killings, persecution, torture, arbitrary detention, sexual violence, and other crimes – coordinated using state institutions."