

The dissection of an Uprising with Ashfaque Nipun

SHARMIN JOYA

Reminiscing about the historic August 5 is filmmaker and activist Ashfaque Nipun, who was actively involved throughout the entire uprising and has been a participant in the anti-fascist movement for the past 17 years.

Walk us through August 5 last year.

On August 5, since the curfew was ongoing, I had to join a large group – there was no other option. But I couldn't reach them because the army had blocked the road and fired blank shots, and didn't allow us to assemble. They chased us away.

I returned home, furious beyond words. This happened around 9:30 in the morning. I was angry and felt deeply insulted that I had come out to protest, but wasn't even allowed to stand on the streets, and instead, was chased away like a criminal.

I took to the streets anyway and reached Shahbagh. It was Elita who called me and informed, "Hasina has fled, and the government has fallen."

Many urged me to go to Ganobhaban, but I didn't go. I believed my job was done. I returned home on a rickshaw. On my way back, I bought sweets for everyone.

However, after reaching home, we received some distressing news. Police stations across the city were being attacked, and religious minorities were in danger. I remember immediately posting on social media, urging everyone to protect police stations and ensure the safety of minorities.

Once the interim government was formed, several committees were established to reform the entire entertainment industry. You declined the offers. Where do you see these committees, after a year?

If I'm being honest, I haven't seen any visible success from these committees. The only achievement I can mention is the reformation of the film censorship grading system when Nahid Islam was an adviser.

I had expected the changes to be more transparent and visible. Historically, the entertainment sector has never been viewed from a business development perspective by any government. Rather, they have always tried to politicise it. I haven't seen any real efforts to

break out of that mindset and establish a welfare system for filmmakers and artists.

Unfortunately, just a few days ago, government grants were distributed from the Grant Committee. I noticed that most people who received the grant were already part of some committees – that was disappointing to say the least.

As the interim government completes a full year in power, how would you evaluate their performance?

It is often said that this interim government was formed at the most pivotal moment in Bangladesh's political history.

If we look back at the last 17 years, the way Sheikh Hasina systematically destroyed every institution – where do I even begin? Law enforcement, the judicial system – there isn't a sector she didn't manipulate. Even the defence forces were riddled with corruption under her regime.

Given all that, there are still certain things that have been deeply disappointing and, frankly, shocking. First, the fact that even after a fascist regime was overthrown during the July Uprising, key figures of that regime were allowed to safely exit the country within two to three months of the government's formation. To me, this is a complete security failure.

This government wasn't formed through backdoor negotiations or political deals – it was born out of a people's movement. According to UN reports, around 1,400 people lost their lives and nearly 20,000 were injured during the uprising. After all that sacrifice, how did the criminals of the past 15 years still get the chance to escape? There's no justification for this.

The most alarming issue we are facing right now is the rise of mob culture. Some have labelled it 'mob justice,' but mobs can never bring justice. This government wasn't supposed to have any political agenda. Yet their failure to control these mobs – and worse, categorising

them as 'pressure groups' – is inexcusable.

The law-and-order situation has been deteriorating day by day. As a citizen, I can tolerate excuses once or twice, but not repeatedly. I want to see concrete action being taken.

I also noticed a problematic trend of indiscriminate filing of cases. After this government was formed and many Awami League figures fled the country, random murder cases began to be filed against artists. This malpractice was also rampant during the previous regime.

As for success stories, I'll leave that to the government to present. Certainly, they may have many successes to showcase. For example, loan repayments by cutting the cost of the mega projects have been managed well, the Hajj management was fantastic, and during Ramadan, the prices of daily necessities were kept under control. In my opinion, these are significant successes.

As someone known for your sharp critique of political and social issues, what recent event has caught your attention – something you'd consider turning into a work of fiction?

Mobocracy or mob lynching is a phenomenon that someone will inevitably pick up as a subject, and I feel human nature is unpredictable – that's what makes it so fascinating. This topic could be explored for years through films, documentaries, or literary works.

If I were to choose this as a fictional narrative, I would probably focus on telling the stories of those individuals who, after forming the government as part of the team – not all, but some – experienced drastic changes in their lifestyles after coming to power.

Also, the moral dilemmas surrounding the idea of 'doing wrong to the wrongdoers' – whether it is right, or if it can ever be justified – that's an area I find deeply intriguing and worth exploring.



PHOTO: STAR AND COLLECTED

NEWS

The day the people triumphed

FROM PAGE 1

outlets reported her meeting with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and her son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, told the BBC that she would not return to politics.

As news of Hasina's departure spread, jubilation erupted across the country. Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Shahbagh, Mirpur Road, and Motijheel and other thoroughfares were soon flooded with people. Flags waved, slogans rang out, strangers embraced one another. The Gono Bhaban, once the fortress of executive power, was overrun by ordinary citizens – men, women, and children – who surged through its gates, celebrated on its lawns, and symbolically reclaimed it in the name of the people. Inside, some offered prayers, others raised slogans; some took selfies while lying on the prime minister's bed.

But even in celebration, violence lingered on the fringes. Law enforcement agencies, disoriented and retreating, clashed with demonstrators in various parts of the capital. At least 66 people were killed in Dhaka alone that day. Police stations, AL offices, and government buildings were attacked and set ablaze in districts such as Chattogram and Sylhet. Protesters, angered by years of suppression, unleashed their fury on institutions they held responsible for injustice.

In Chattogram, mobs stormed the Metropolitan Police Headquarters and Dampara Police Lines. In Sylhet, the District Police Office,

police outposts, and the homes of AL leaders were vandalised and torched. Similar scenes played out in Jashore, Savar, and Dhamrai, where dozens more were killed or injured in clashes. Hospitals overflowed with the wounded. Morgues struggled to accommodate the deaths.

By evening, President Mohammed Shahabuddin held an emergency meeting with the military chiefs, opposition leaders, and civil society members at the Bangabhaban. The meeting decided to dissolve parliament, release all political prisoners, and form an interim government. It also approved the immediate release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The student leaders who had sparked the revolution were not present at the official meetings but remained resolute. At a press conference held that evening, coordinators Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud declared that the power must be handed over to a national interim government proposed by the students and citizens. "No other government will be accepted," they stated. "A new political settlement must emerge from the people's victory."

They vowed to publish the outline of the interim government within 24 hours, following consultation with civil society, coordination committees, and political groups. "This victory belongs to the martyred students," Nahid said. "And we

will honour their sacrifice with a government that reflects the will of the people."

The United States commended the Bangladesh Army for its restraint and urged that the formation of the interim government be democratic and inclusive. The White House and the State Department both issued statements encouraging all parties to refrain from violence and to restore peace. US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer called for swift democratic elections under a balanced interim arrangement.

As fires smouldered across police headquarters, the Gono Bhaban filled with barefoot children and laughing elders. The streets trembled under the footsteps of a free people – one thing became clear: the July uprising had not only dethroned a regime; it had reawakened the nation's democratic spirit.

August 5 was not merely the end of Sheikh Hasina's rule. It was the beginning of something new – a moment when ordinary people, led by students, reclaimed their voice and their future. The day will be remembered for the unity of the oppressed and toppling of the seemingly untouchable.

From Jatrabari to Shahbagh, from Chattogram to Sylhet, the message rang loud and clear: Bangladesh belongs to its people. August 5 proved that no ruler is mightier than a people united, and no regime can outlast the will for justice.

'Don't waste the opportunity the

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh's 1972 constitution, said last year's mass uprising was driven by the repeated failure of governments to deliver on promises made after the 1990 pro-democracy movement.

"The previous regime's brutal assault on unarmed students and citizens demanding a civilised, democratic, and independent society shocked the world's conscience," he wrote.

Calling the Liberation War a historic achievement of the people, Kamal said, "Even after 53 years, we have failed to realise the goals on which this nation was founded."

In his speech, Mizanur Rahman said, "Those calling the 1972 constitution a Mujibist document – mostly from the defeated forces of the Liberation War – are using this uprising to question the constitution of the Liberation War. The government has fallen into their trap."

He alleged the July Declaration was being finalised by just two or three parties without broader consultation. "If there is any conspiracy here, we will resist it."

Speaking at the event, Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince said various narratives were being pushed to make

the Liberation War controversial. "Nothing outside the spirit of 1971 will be acceptable."

Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal President Sharif Nurul Ambia said, "Since the uprising, there's been a deliberate attempt to replace the ideals of 1971 with those of 1947. Our common commitment must be to uphold the aspirations of the Liberation War."

Gono Forum Presidium Member AKM Jagul Haider Afridi said the reform process must not become a vehicle for fundamentalist forces to return to power. "We must remain vigilant so that the defeated forces of 1971 do not form the next government."

BNP Standing Committee Member Selima Rahman said the chief adviser had failed to stay neutral. "People are agitated. Power must be handed over to a people's government immediately through elections."

Meanwhile, Nagarik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manina said, "We fought to rescue democracy – but where has it brought us? Even now, no one knows what will be in the July Declaration."

Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque said the

government had failed to meet public expectations, despite its wide support. "Inequality, injustice, and unemployment have only worsened. Even after a year, the state has failed to ensure safety for the people."

He added, "This [July] declaration has become a partisan document, not a national one."

He also warned of the deliberate engineering behind the rise of right-wing forces. "Without an elected representative government, the crisis cannot be solved. Bangladesh stands at a crossroads."

Socialist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoz said, "Should we throw away a constitution made with the blood of 30 lakh martyrs? Only the defeated of 1971 say such things."

Gono Forum President Subrata Chowdhury said a lack of transparency over the declaration had caused confusion.

If no election date is announced, it will raise serious doubts. The government must act responsibly. You [the government] are playing with fire – Jamaat on one side, NCP on the other. Your failures now outweigh your successes. If elections aren't held by February, your exit will be disgraceful."

দৃঢ় সংকল্পে এগিয়ে চলি সন্তানার পথে

আল-আরাফাহ্ ইসলামী ব্যাংক গর্ভের সাথে স্মরণ করে সেই সাহসিকতা, এক্য আর স্বপ্ন দেখার

দুর্দান্তীয় শক্তিকে; যা আমাদের দিয়েছে বাংলাদেশকে নতুন রূপে গড়ে তোলার সুযোগ।