

Police came but it was too late

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At the press conference, Ruma said the criminals were now threatening them. "On the day of the killings, we sought police help by dialling 999 multiple times. But police did not respond. They came to the spot after the killings," she said.

She said rivalry between her family and some of their neighbours began after they started constructing a building.

Local union parishad chairman Shimul Billah wanted the job, but her family declined.

She claimed Shimul used his aides to extort money from them and threatened to kill them when they refused.

Ruma said her mother had contested the union parishad chairman election twice. "As my mother was a supporter of the BNP, she was not allowed to win," she said, adding that her rivals, out of jealousy, implicated her in a false drug case.

She alleged that money changed hands the night before the killings and that Shimul was involved.

Ruma claimed Shimul was backed by Md Billal Hossain, father of Adviser Asif Mahmud. That is why Shimul has not been arrested, she said.

Billal Hossain could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts. He did not respond to text messages either.

Contacted last night, Asif Mahmud refuted the allegations and termed them politically motivated. He said

Ruma had earlier stated that the murder was planned at the house of an upazila BNP leader.

The adviser also claimed he has evidence that a member of Ruma's family had earlier said some local BNP activists had pressured them to include his (Asif's) and his father's names in the case.

Referring to Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir's allegation that Asif Mahmud had established a "mafia-style rule" in Muradnagar, the adviser said the statement was "politically motivated."

Asif said that though he is an adviser, his family has no political affiliation.

"I would urge you [media] to visit Muradnagar and talk to the locals to find out who is establishing mafia rule there," he said.

Earlier, Nasir, after visiting 13 BNP leaders and activists in Cumilla jail, told reporters, "While positive politics exists across the country, it is absent in Muradnagar. Those who led the anti-fascist protests in July last year and had faced imprisonment multiple times before that have been sent to jail after August 5 at the behest of Asif Mahmud."

"Thirteen leaders and activists of BNP and its affiliated organisations have been imprisoned, but not a single activist of the fascist Awami League from Muradnagar is in jail," he added.

[Our correspondent from Cumilla contributed to the report]

Russian train slams into bus, killing one and injuring 11

AFP, Moscow

A freight train rammed into a tourist bus at a level crossing near the Russian city of Saint Petersburg yesterday, killing one person and injuring 11, officials said.

The accident in northwestern Russia occurred at 0300 GMT, Russia's rail network said. The bus was on the tracks when the train hit it at full speed.

The train driver applied emergency braking "but the distance was too short and he could not avoid a collision," the railway statement said.

"According to preliminary information, 12 passengers on the bus were injured and one of them died of injuries," it said.

Trump to raise tariff

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"buying massive amounts of Russian Oil" and selling it for "big profits."

"They don't care how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian War Machine," Trump added. "Because of this, I will be substantially raising the Tariff paid by India to the USA."

But he did not provide details on what tariff level he had in mind.

For now, an existing 10 percent US tariff on Indian products is expected to rise to 25 percent come Thursday.

Bangladesh to expand access

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firms to build silos and related infrastructure for storing US soybeans in Bangladesh.

Washington has also urged Bangladesh to reduce purchases from China as part of its broader Indo-Pacific strategy.

Bangladesh will accept prior marketing authorisation from the US Food and Drug Administration as sufficient for approval of medical devices, and will recognise the US dairy safety system as equivalent to its own. It will also recognise USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service oversight

for US meat, poultry, and egg products, including associated cold storage and processing facilities.

In addition, Bangladesh has pledged to submit a comprehensive notification to the World Trade Organization disclosing all government subsidies, and to address outstanding arrears owed to US firms in accordance with its commitments under the International Monetary Fund programme.

On the regulatory side, the government will ensure that laws, administrative rulings, and proposed regulations are published promptly and made accessible online. This

includes regulatory impact assessments and explanatory notes to increase transparency.

Bangladesh also committed to strengthening intellectual property protections by ensuring fair and transparent procedures for the examination, opposition, and cancellation of trademarks and patents.

The agreement marks a strategic shift in Bangladesh's trade orientation and underscores Washington's renewed push to bolster economic alliances in South Asia, as the geopolitical rivalry with China intensifies across the Indo-Pacific.

Third phase begins

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timeline for completing the process is not yet confirmed, but sources say informal talks with experts have already begun.

Last October, the interim government formed six reform commissions on the constitution, electoral system, judiciary, Anti-Corruption Commission, administration, and police reforms.

The commissions submitted their reports in February. Later, under the leadership of Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, the National Consensus Commission was formed to build political agreements on the reforms.

The recommendations were divided into two categories -- those that could be implemented immediately, and 166 key proposals requiring further discussions.

In the first phase (March 20-May 19), the commission held separate talks with 33 political parties and reached consensus on more than 65 issues.

In the second phase (June 3-July 31),

it discussed issues thematically with 30 parties, reaching agreement or decisions on 19 core reform proposals. Nine of these had unanimous approval, while 10 had differing opinions from one or more parties.

The July Charter draft says the proposals will be executed within two years after the next elected government takes office.

The BNP supports this timeline, but Jamaat-e-Islami, National Citizens Party, and several others object, demanding that the charter be placed within a binding legal framework.

In the third phase, the commission will focus on deciding how to implement the agreed reforms.

Experts will review which proposals could be enacted through ordinances and advise on the government's role in the process.

Proposals requiring constitutional amendments will be discussed further with political parties.

The commission will also seek expert advice on proposals with dissenting

opinions and try to reduce those disagreements.

Commission sources say that they are concerned that without a shared understanding on implementation, many parties may refuse to sign the July Charter.

Efforts will be made to bring parties to a reasonable common position and provide an acceptable legal basis for the charter.

A member of the commission, wishing to remain anonymous, told The Daily Star that the third phase will proceed through continuous discussions with legal, constitutional, and political experts, as well as political parties, to secure signatures on the charter and mitigate disagreements.

Commission Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz chaired the Sunday's meeting at the parliament building, where members Badiul Alam Majumdar, Justice Md Emdadul Haque, Ittekkharuzzaman, Safar Raj Hossain, Md Ayub Mia, and Monir Haider were present.

Sheikh Hasina ordered

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and ex-IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun.

The tribunal also recorded statement of a third prosecution witness yesterday. Parvin, 27, a labourer and mother of two, in her deposition recounted how police shot her in the eye as she tried to save a wounded teen on July 18, 2024. She said the teen later died as police shot him again under Jatrabari Flyover in the capital that day.

State-appointed defence counsel for Hasina and Kamal cross-examined the witnesses. Another accused Mamun, who became the state witness, was in the dock during the hearing.

Witness Emran, a Dhaka College student, told the tribunal that as he joined a protest near Bijoynagar water tank around 3:00pm on July 19 last year, police shot him in his left leg with a rifle.

Two protesters took him to Mitford hospital and doctors referred him to the National Institute of Traumatology & Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR), also known as Pangu hospital.

He said as he was being taken there in an ambulance, joint forces intercepted him near the home of former home minister in Dhanmondi. The vehicle was not allowed to move for an hour.

Emran said Hasina visited the hospital either on July 26 or 27. He said, "Sheikh Hasina came to see me. I addressed her as 'Madam,' but she asked me to call her 'Apa' instead. She asked me where I studied. I told her that I was a student at Dhaka College. She then asked if I lived in the college dormitory, and I said no, I stayed outside the dorm. She seemed to realise then that I was a protester."

Emran said Hasina asked him if he had seen who shot him. He responded by saying police opened fire, although

he couldn't identify them.

He saw Hasina briefly speak to four or five other victims.

"Afterwards, she went to the hospital help desk, where doctors, staffers, and others were present. I heard that she gave an instruction -- 'no release, no treatment.' But at the time, I couldn't fully understand what she meant."

Emran said, "My surgery was scheduled for the following morning. However, after Sheikh Hasina's instruction, the hospital refused to do the surgery. I received no further treatment. My condition began to deteriorate, and standard medications were not provided. As antibiotic supplied by the hospital was not working on me, I needed stronger one from outside, but the hospital didn't allow us to bring any from outside.

"My father tried to have me discharged so that I could get proper treatment elsewhere. But the hospital refused. Instead, they planned to send me to jail after amputating my leg. However, my senior brothers did not allow that. That's when I finally understood what her chilling instruction truly meant."

Emran said, "Sheikh Hasina incited the police force by labelling us as descendants of Razakars, and I hold her responsible."

He also held Kamal and Mamun responsible for being shot by police.

During cross-examination, defence lawyer Amir Hossain asked, "Are you affiliated with any political party?"

Emran said, "Yes, I'm associated with a student organisation."

The lawyer then stated, "Since you subscribe to an ideology different from that of my client, you have made a false testimony against the accused."

Witness Parvin in her testimony described the horror she witnessed

City

'July rekindled the hope for a just country'

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President Shahabuddin, in his message, said the July Uprising was a mass eruption of the youth and people against decades of deprivation, misuse, corruption, looting, enforced disappearances, killings, and the denial of voting rights.

Its goal, he said, was to dismantle a discriminatory system, restore democracy, empower citizens, and ensure freedom of expression.

He expressed hope that the uprising's ideals would guide the reform process and help build a just, prosperous, and democratic Bangladesh.

The president paid tribute to the martyrs and injured fighters of the uprising, pledging that the state would ensure justice for their families.

Asserting that July rekindled the people's hope for a just, equal, and corruption-free country, Chief Adviser Prof Yunus, in his message, called upon all to come forward to build a Bangladesh where tyranny will never rise again.

He said the sacrifices of thousands had created this rare opportunity for national reform, and it must be protected at any cost.

The fallen autocrats and their self-serving allies remain active, conspiring to derail the nation's progress, he said, adding, "Let us stand united beyond all divisions to confront and defeat these threats...."

"August 5 marks an unforgettable chapter in the history of Bangladesh. It was on this very day, one year ago, that the July Uprising reached its triumph, liberating our beloved nation from the grip of long standing fascist rule."

Yunus extended his heartfelt congratulations to the people of Bangladesh, whose united struggle brought about this achievement.

He remembered with deep reverence

Authoritarian system

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e-Islami and the National Citizen Party accounted for 5 and 1 percent respectively, the report added.

Following the fall of the AL regime last year, political parties took control of various businesses and operations once dominated by AL men.

"Political parties collect Tk 2.21 crore every day from 53 transport terminals and stands in Dhaka city. They have also taken over leases of bridges, marketplaces, jetties, and quarries across the country," researcher Julkarnayeen said.

Moreover, these parties also filed politically motivated cases and disrupted law and order by forming mobs, blocking roads, and surrounding police stations, he added.

In response, the interim government has often appeared lenient, he noted.

"Some religion-based parties, including Jamaat-e-Islami, rejected the Women Reform Commission and its report, while Hefazat-e-Islam's derogatory remarks towards women ran counter to the spirit of the July uprising."

Julkarnayeen further added that such parties were involved in destroying shrines, halting cultural programmes, attacking libraries and minority communities, and harassing women in the streets.

"Political parties tabled many proposals but have not initiated democratic practices or internal reforms for integrity.

"Political parties also continue the politicisation of administration and educational institutions."

In his presentation, researcher Shahzada noted an alarming rise in mob violence, saying people have been killed in mob beatings, and the chief adviser's press secretary referred to such mobs as "pressure groups".

He said cases have been accepted indiscriminately, and incidents of extrajudicial killings and deaths in custody persisted. "Police remained inactive in fulfilling their responsibilities during such events."

While the interim government formed a commission to probe enforced disappearances, Shahzada said its position on holding the armed forces accountable remains unclear. He added that its stance on dismantling the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), accused

the brave youths, labourers, and professionals who sacrificed their lives while confronting the fascist forces.

The chief adviser added that the uprising was a collective eruption against 16 years of oppressive authoritarian misrule.

He also said that since assuming responsibility, the interim government has launched extensive reform efforts across all sectors of the state to fulfil these aspirations.

The trials related to the July killings are progressing swiftly, he said, adding that measures have been taken to preserve the memory of the July martyrs and rehabilitate the injured fighters.

"To accelerate our democratic journey, dialogue continues with political parties and stakeholders on necessary reforms, including the political and electoral systems."

Yunus added that the interim government is committed to restoring state power to the people through a peaceful, fair, and transparent election, as part of a sustainable political solution.

Meanwhile, BNP has decided to send a five-member delegation to today's programme on Manik Mia Avenue. The decision was made at a meeting held at the party chairperson's Gulshan office, presided over by acting chairperson Tarique Rahman. The delegation will be led by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir.

With the day announced a public holiday, the July Declaration is set to be unveiled by the chief adviser at a public gathering at the South Plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the capital's Manik Mia Avenue at 5:00pm.

The unveiling will be broadcast live on Bangladesh Television.

The event, organised by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in collaboration with the Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat and managed by the

of numerous human rights violations, is also ambiguous.

The government has formed II reform commissions, Shahzada said, but the rationale behind the process of forming commissions on media, health, women, labour, and local government was unclear. He pointed out that important sectors such as education and the private sector have been sidelined.

Moreover, there is no clear roadmap for implementing the recommendations of these commissions, he observed.

He flagged complaints that the six reform commissions on administration, judiciary, election, constitution, police, and anti-corruption lacked representation from religious and minority communities.

"There is no initiative to reform intelligence agencies such as the DGFI, DB, NSI, and NTMC, which were used to institutionalise authoritarianism, violate basic rights, extort, and manipulate the financial sector.

"We continue to witness chaos and indecision in public administration. There is a serious lack of transparency in recruitment and promotion within the administration, judiciary, and educational institutions."

Shahzada noted that many who were promoted had previously faced allegations of corruption and breaches of administrative discipline. Yet, they received privileges under the pretence of having been deprived.

"The trend of political partisanship in the judiciary still prevails."

He warned that banning the Awami League's activities under pressure from certain political parties risks future repression of political opposition.

TIB's research report said that a political party, or "king's party," was formed with the support of the government.

When a journalist asked, "Who is this king's party?" In reply, Dr Ittekkharuzzaman said, "There is nothing to hide. It is the Jatiya Nagorik Party [National Citizen Party]. It has been described as a king's party. Because two of its allies are currently part of the government, it qualifies as a king's party."

The TIB executive director said the political journey after August 5 was unfortunate.

Promises won't work

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leader, adding that creating safe jobs at home and abroad will be one of the main goals of the party.

"If the people give us the responsibility to run the country, the party will start working to implement these plans as quickly as possible," he added.

Tarique urged party members to connect with the people and share BNP's promises.

"We need people's support and cooperation," he said, urging party leaders and activists to earn and uphold public trust. "Remember, if you earn people's trust, then you are a leader. If the people reject you, then you are not a leader," he added.

Tarique said, "Leadership can be sworn in with the help of the administration. But you can truly lead if the people are with you."

At the event, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir warned that conspiracies and plots are being

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, will be held to commemorate the unity and sacrifice that defined the uprising.

The formal proceedings will begin at 11:00am with a series of musical and cultural performances. The morning session will open with Tong er Gaan, followed by performances from Islami Chhatra Shibir's cultural wing Saimum Shilpigoshthi at 11:20am and Kolorob Shilpigoshthi at 11:40am.

Solo acts by Nahid and Tashfee will follow, leading up to the Zuhr prayer break at 1:00pm.

The afternoon will feature a mix of musical performances and commemorative events. At 1:10pm, Chittagong Hip-Hop Hood will perform, followed by Sezan, who gained popularity during the uprising for his rap songs "Kotha Ko" (Speak up) and "Awaz Uda" (Raise your voice), at 1:30pm.

The band Shunno will take the stage at 2:00pm, with a special segment titled "Fascist's Flight" scheduled for 2:25pm.

Performances by Shayan at 2:40pm and the duo of Ethun Babu and Moushumi at 3:00pm will follow.

Popular rock bands Souls and Warfaze will perform at 3:30pm and 4:00pm respectively, before the Asr prayer break at 4:45pm.

At 5:00pm, the July Declaration will be unveiled by the chief adviser, followed by a performance from the Basic Guitar Learning School at 5:30pm.

This will be followed by performances from the indigenous female band F Minor, after which singer Elita Karim will take the stage. A special drone drama, Do You Miss Me, written by The Anonymous, will then be presented.

The event will conclude with a performance by popular rock band Artcell.

Explaining this, he said, "From that afternoon, some top leaders of the existing political parties started favouritism, extortion, and making money from legal cases. Over the past year, these things have increased. Even actions taken from the top level of the parties could not stop it.

"The new political parties also followed the same model from the beginning. They got involved in extortion, and moved forward on a self-destructive path."

Ittekkharuzzaman acknowledged that, despite many challenges, there have been positive developments, including reforms in the judiciary, preparations for the upcoming national election, and improvements in governance.

"However, the standards of good governance are yet to be achieved. Political parties, civil society, and even the media have not consistently fulfilled the roles demanded by these times," he said.

Ittekkharuzzaman criticised the government's tendency to cherry-pick trivial recommendations from commissions while neglecting deeper reforms.

He said that although consensus was reached on curbing executive overreach -- a hallmark of authoritarianism -- some political parties only offered conditional support, agreeing to this reform only if they came to power. This, he said, is extremely troubling.

"There is still no clarity about the legal standing of the July Charter. Even if signed by all parties, what enforceable power will it hold?" he asked. "How will it be implemented?"

"I'm not suggesting these concerns have triggered a crisis yet. But they deserve national attention, as they pose a significant risk."

Ittekkharuzzaman concluded by saying that the opportunity to build a new Bangladesh must not be squandered.

"If the July Charter can be transformed into a legally binding document, allowing citizens to hold politicians accountable for their commitments, we may avoid repeating past authoritarianism.

"If not, we risk slipping backwards. And next time, it may take 54 days, not 54 years, for people to rise again."

Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said his party fully agrees with the draft of the July Charter prepared by the consensus commission and is ready to sign it.

He said any confusion over the matter is politically motivated.

Talking to reporters at his Gulshan residence, Salahuddin termed the July Declaration a piece of literature.

"It's just a declaration that is being presented to the nation," he said, adding that he has nothing to say about the timing of the declaration.

"If they want to present it after one year, we have no objection. We have given our opinion."

Asked about his expectations regarding the chief adviser's expected speech, Salahuddin said he was not sure what to expect.

"We're not sure. But maybe in that speech, the chief adviser will inform the nation about the promised election schedule that was fixed in the London meeting."