

20 hurt in clash at Al-Arafah bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 people, including the head of the human resources (HR) department at Al-Arafah Islami Bank, were injured in a clash between the bank's security personnel and recently terminated employees.

The incident occurred around 4:15pm yesterday at the capital's Dainik Bangla intersection.

Among the injured, security guard Shahinur was seriously wounded and admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition. Several others have also been admitted to the hospital.

HR head Amir Hossain is currently undergoing treatment at Square Hospital. Police rescued three deputy managing directors of the bank from the attackers.

Zubair Bin Rashid, one of the terminated employees, said that a total of 547 employees were dismissed across the country on July 20. Since July 22, they have been staging a sit-in protest demanding reinstatement.

He claimed that the bank's personnel attacked them during their peaceful demonstration.

Inspector Moniruzzaman (Investigation) of Paltan Police
SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Makeshift stalls line the pavement and the road near the level crossing in the capital's Jurain area, shrinking space for vehicular movement. The resulting congestion is a daily ordeal for road users. The photo was taken on Wednesday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

India defiant amid tariff row with US

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said he will not compromise the interests of the country's farmers even if he has to pay a heavy price, in his first comments after US President Donald Trump's salvo of a 50% tariff on Indian goods.

"For us, our farmers' welfare is supreme," Modi said at an event in New Delhi. "India will never compromise on the well-being of its farmers, dairy [sector] and fishermen. And I know personally I will have to pay a heavy price for it," he said.

Trump announced an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods on Wednesday, raising the total duty to 50% -- among the highest imposed on any US trading partner. The new tariff, effective August 28, is meant to penalise India for continuing to buy Russian oil, Trump has said.

While Modi did not explicitly mention the US or the collapsed trade talks, his comments marked a clear defence of India's position.

Trade talks between India and the United States broke down after five rounds of negotiations over disagreement on opening India's vast farm and dairy sectors and stopping Russian oil purchases.

India's foreign ministry has called the US decision "extremely unfortunate" and said it would "take all necessary steps to protect its national interests."

The US has yet to impose similar tariffs on China, the biggest buyer of Russian oil. Experts say China's dominance in rare earth minerals -- critical to high-tech industries -- gives it leverage that India currently lacks.

NOAB voices concern

FROM PAGE 1

fundamental rights such as freedom of expression and freedom of the media would be guaranteed. Unfortunately, that expectation has not been fulfilled in the past year," reads the statement.

"We have observed with concern that recently, at the daily Janakantha newspaper, there has been an attempt to evict the owners and forcibly press demands by inciting a mob," it added.

"If there are any dues or payments owed to the workers, it is supposed to be resolved through the Labour Court. Any disputes related to news or content could be reported to the Bangladesh Press Council for resolution. However, instead of doing that, an untoward situation was created at the newspaper's office and on the portal," said NOAB.

"The culture of inciting mobs at any newspaper or media house to threaten and intimidate the owners must be stopped," the statement added.

According to TIB, between August 2024 and July 2025, at least 496 journalists faced harassment. Of them, 266 were accused in murder cases linked to the July uprising. Three journalists were killed while on duty, and at least 24 media professionals were removed from their posts. Editors of eight newspapers and news editors of 11 private television channels were also dismissed, said the statement.

NOAB demands that the government take urgent steps to safeguard press freedom and ensure a free and democratic society.

Former BRUR VC

FROM PAGE 12

During the hearing, Kalimullah said, "This [yesterday] morning, shortly after breakfast, I was suddenly arrested by the Detective Branch of police. I didn't resist."

In response, the judge said, "Why would you resist? You have to go to jail. You'll go to the grave alone... If you commit corruption, you'll also have to go to jail alone... No one will go with you. Many of those involved in corruption are rotting in jail, while their relatives are enjoying trips abroad with the money earned from corruption."

The judge also asked Kalimullah why he was living full-time in Dhaka instead of on the university campus in Rangpur.

Kalimullah replied, "No, sir. Even though I was in Dhaka, I had a residence there [in Rangpur]. Forty percent of my salary was deducted for that."

He added, "The former education minister Dipu Moni used to make unreasonable demands. Because of her, I avoided going to campus. I even held a press conference against her demands. This angered her."

"I worked 17-18 hours a day for the betterment of the university. Since the Liberation War, this is the first time a university vice-chancellor has challenged an education minister. That is why Dipu Moni made these false allegations against me."

At the end of the hearing, Kalimullah was heard thanking the judge before being taken to the court's lockup.

At 5:43pm, he was escorted in a prison van to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

Kalimullah was arrested by DB from Mohammadpur in the capital around 12:15pm yesterday. He was later handed over to the ACC.

A year of progress with caveats

FROM PAGE 1

few other cases against senior police officers as well.

As for the reforms, the National Consensus Commission appears to be inching closer to the July Charter -- an agreement among political parties that will guide future reforms. With the election timeline, as well as the July Declaration, announced on the anniversary of July Uprising, the interim government appears to be progressing reasonably well on its pledges. So far as checking boxes are concerned, it is fairly on course.

The financial sector reforms have been commendable too. The interim administration had inherited an economy on the brink of collapse. Over the last year, it has contained outflow of foreign exchange and noticeably improved once dwindling foreign reserve. Exports have turned around and banks have regained consumer confidence, thanks to prudent regulations. A spiralling inflation has been tamed with encouraging signs that it will dip further. But given the temporary nature of this government, most investors are waiting for a more predictable political landscape, which will unlock Bangladesh's full economic potential leading to employment generation.

But reforms have been largely absent in areas like bureaucracy, anti-corruption, policing, health or education. Most of the discussions have centred around issues deemed crucial for election, caretaker government and the constitution, that will presumably help revive the independence of autonomous and constitutional bodies, rebuild institutions crucial for a strong democracy. Arriving at this political compact in itself may be regarded as a worthy effort and a sign of progress. However, similar to the July Declaration, which has been roundly criticised for failing to embody people's aspirations, the July Charter might also be a letdown compared to the high expectations around it.

As for the women's affairs commission, the government's conspicuous silence despite blatant public abuse from religious hardliners suggest that Dr Yunus's administration has all but disowned it. In fact, even the physical assaults on women, and there have been quite a few of them, do not appear to have drawn much attention of the cabinet of advisers many of whom had been vocal activists for most of their life.

Journo stabbed to death in Gazipur

FROM PAGE 1

On information, police went to the scene and recovered the body.

Sub-inspector Zahirul Islam of Basan Police Station said the body was sent to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Khairul Islam, a local trader, said at least three people attacked Tuhin.

Rabiul Hasan, deputy commissioner of Gazipur Metropolitan Police, said they have collected some video footage of the incident and also got some clues.

The official added that police were on a manhunt to nab the culprits.

In separate statements, the Jamaat-e-Islami, Khelafat Majlish and Islami Andolan Bangladesh protested against and expressed deep concern over the murder of Tuhin.

Meanwhile, a journalist was assaulted allegedly by extortionists in Gazipur's Sahapara area on Wednesday while investigating allegations of extortion collected from battery-run and CNG-run auto-

This is an aspect that rights advocates at home and abroad have noted.

Ain O Salish Kendra, a right organisation notes in its press release of August 7 that women are "living in an environment of widespread insecurity". It says, rape, sexual harassment, and domestic and social violence have become news items. Hate speech is becoming increasingly aggressive. "This oppression of women is not limited at the individual level, but rather, it has taken the form of structural violence, increasingly narrowing the avenues for women's social, political, and economic empowerment."

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) said in its report in July that "tensions and religious freedom concerns still persist". It points out that although Professor Yunus reiterates the importance of religious freedom in Bangladesh and a commitment to maintain religious harmony in his speeches, individuals express concern about their safety and ability to express their faith openly. "Some religious minorities and Muslim women emphasised that they continue to face societal-level discrimination from more hardline Islamic groups, and they emphasised that attacks along religious lines, while sporadic, continue."

Far from being isolated instances, the spectacle of a few gruesome executions, mob violence, and public assault of women were symptomatic of the overall deterioration of law and order of the past year. The government's denial, and labelling reports as 'fear mongering' have hardly helped matters.

The police, on the other hand, are yet to find their morale that they had lost during the July protests when they killed hundreds of protesters on the streets. The army continues to work in aid to civil power with magistracy powers to help with policing.

Despite all its rhetoric and promise of good governance, the interim government has not been able to stop murder cases being filed against hundreds of people, directly or remotely connected to the previous regime. Hundreds of people, perceived to be beneficiaries or sympathisers of the Awami League regime, have found themselves accused of murder. These have included journalists, politicians, judges, lawyers, film stars and even former sportsmen. Many of them have been arrested and denied bail. Even the law adviser admitted in a recent

rickshaw drivers.

The victim, Anwar Hossain, 35, a staff reporter for the daily Bangladesh Alo, was attacked in broad daylight, allegedly in front of police.

He was undergoing treatment at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital in a "critical condition".

Meanwhile, police yesterday arrested a suspect named Farid in connection with the incident, said Mehedi Hasan, officer-in-charge of Gazipur Sadar Police Station.

The incident has sparked outrage on social media after a video of the attack went viral.

The video shows seven to eight men surrounding Anwar and beating him, with one assailant striking his head and face with a brick. Although police could be seen nearby in the video, no immediate action was taken.

Police and locals later rescued Anwar and admitted him to the hospital.

interview that mob violence and fabricated charges have been deeply troubling. At least 266 journalists have been implicated in various cases, many for murder, related to the events of July and August last year.

According to Human Rights Watch, between August 6 and September 25, 2024, police lodged cases against 92,486 people, most of them related to murder. Nearly 400 former ministers, members of parliament, and other Awami League officials have been named in over 1,170 cases, which also include hundreds of unnamed individuals, said the international human rights organisation.

While it is desirable that Bangladesh speaks with a strong voice and articulates its vision, the interim government has yet to come up with a win-win vision as regards our largest neighbour. Hence, it is not surprising that relations with India remain cool, at best, with the borders still shut down a whole year after the interim government took oath. On the other hand, efforts to deepen relations with China have been noticeable in frequent exchanges and visits of delegations. Rohingya repatriation efforts continue to face hurdles and have become increasingly complicated, with the Arakan Army seizing control of large swathes of Rakhine state, which borders Bangladesh. In the midst of all this, the suggestion of a humanitarian passage to transport aid to the Rohingya sparked widespread criticism.

Although the Yunus government has repealed the notorious Cyber Security Act -- used to target journalists under the Awami League regime -- there are concerns over provisions of the Cyber Security Ordinance, that replaces it, since it grants authorities extensive powers to arrest individuals and conduct searches without a warrant. In another positive development, Bangladesh signed on to the UN's International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The government's one year in office has been marked by its lack of resolve. It has baulked and backed down in the face of protests no matter how unreasonable the demands. Repeated reversal of its own decisions clearly betrayed a lack of coordination within itself. The interim government's silence and inaction in situations that demanded immediate intervention only exposed imprudence and callousness.

The injured journalist's mother, Anwara Sultana, filed a written complaint with Gazipur Sadar Police Station yesterday.

According to the complaint, a group led by Raktim, Sourav, and Farid, regularly collected Tk 30-40 in extortion from each battery-run and CNG-run auto-rickshaw.

When Anwar went to the spot to collect information, the group dragged him behind a tea stall, and beat him with sticks, bricks, and locally-made weapons.

They also snatched two mobile phones and Tk 26,250 in cash, according to the complaint.

OC Mehedi Hasan told The Daily Star that they arrested Farid after analysing video footage. "Efforts are underway to identify and apprehend the remaining attackers."

Asked about the inaction of police during the attack, he said, "There was one police officer there. I haven't seen the video yet. We will take action after watching it."

Bangladesh hopes

FROM PAGE 1

The Trump administration imposed the same 20 percent reciprocal tariff on Vietnam, currently the second-largest apparel supplier to the US, bringing its ETR to 36.5 percent as well. However, goods transhipped through Vietnam now face a 40 percent duty, offering Bangladesh a competitive edge.

India, the fourth-largest apparel supplier to the US, is set to face a 50 percent reciprocal tariff in the coming weeks, raising its total ETR to 66.5 percent. Meanwhile, China, the largest supplier, currently faces a 55 percent tariff, with negotiations on a reciprocal rate still ongoing.

These developments are expected to divert a notable volume of US apparel orders from India and China to Bangladesh.

"This is a better opportunity," said Faisal Samad, managing director of Surma Garments Ltd and director of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). "Retailers and brands, who were earlier confused, are now coming back with higher volumes of orders."

He, however, stressed the need for strategic marketing, improved price negotiation, and better promotion and branding of both the sector and the country to fully leverage the opportunity.

Showkat Aziz Russell, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) who was a private sector representative in the final round of negotiations with the US Trade Representative (USTR), said Bangladesh has committed to reducing the bilateral trade gap by 75 percent as soon as possible.

Bangladesh currently exports over \$8.2 billion worth of goods to the US annually, while importing just over \$2 billion, resulting in a trade gap of about \$6 billion.

"This gap can be narrowed," Russell said, citing cotton imports as one example. Bangladesh imports \$4 billion worth of cotton globally every year, but only 5 percent comes from

the US. "If we start sourcing \$1 billion worth of US cotton, the gap will shrink significantly," Russell said.

He also requested the US government to allow "Made from US cotton" tags on Bangladeshi apparel to enable exporters to claim additional tariff benefits. Use of US cotton in production can unlock special treatment under the new tariff regime, he added.

Beyond cotton, Russell pointed to Bangladesh's potential to import more US-made products, including LPG, soybean, wheat, agricultural goods, and even aircraft, to help balance trade. "Of course, Bangladesh will enjoy the spillover effects of the higher tariffs on China and India," he noted.

Mohammed Amirul Haque, chairman of Seacom Group and another private sector member of the Bangladeshi negotiation team, said the country is now in a more favourable position in terms of ETR.

"A new door of opportunity has opened. This is a great achievement for Bangladesh," he said. "In reality, both countries will benefit from this arrangement."

Still, exporters face challenges. As countries like China and India redirect their shipments to Europe at lower prices due to US tariffs, Bangladeshi suppliers may face stiffer competition in the European Union market, where they export over \$25 billion annually. This could lead to additional price pressure from European buyers.

Moreover, demand for apparel in the US could fall due to inflation and rising prices, potentially affecting future shipments.

Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, economist and chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development, warned that a downturn is possible. "When the Trump administration imposed a 25 percent tariff on Chinese goods in 2018, US apparel imports fell," he said.

The US used to import \$105 billion worth of garments annually, but by 2024, that figure had declined to \$85 billion, he added.

Election top priority

FROM PAGE 1

however, did not provide further details on the proposals.

The press secretary said a dispute has arisen regarding the amount of honorarium to be paid to each family member of those killed during the July uprising. The Ministry of Liberation War Affairs has been tasked with drafting a regulation to address the matter.

Asked about former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Shafiqul said the government wants to bring her back and ensure she faces trial, while also guaranteeing her the right to a

fair trial.

Meanwhile, the advisory council congratulated the commerce adviser on successfully concluding tariff negotiations with the United States, and the cultural affairs adviser on the smooth execution of the 36-day commemorative events in July.

The council also approved two new proposals: renaming "Gazipur Digital University" to "University of Frontier Technology Bangladesh," and upgrading World Tourism Day, observed on September 27, from a Category 'Ga' to a Category 'Kha' national day.

EC finalises the code of conduct

FROM PAGE 1

The entire process will be managed through an ad hoc arrangement.

In-country postal voting will also be allowed for government officials, election workers, and individuals in legal custody or prison. These voters will be able to register online and vote through the same method.

Addressing concerns about digital interference, EC Sanaullah said the commission has imposed strict restrictions on the misuse of artificial intelligence during the election period.

"The code of conduct is for candidates and political parties. But AI will be used by many others. There are various entities. Some will operate from within the country, some from abroad. To counter this, we have formed a committee. They are already working to determine what actions can be taken," he said.

Regarding internet access during the election, he added: "Our primary goal is to conduct the election without reducing bandwidth or disrupting any services. Unless absolutely necessary, the Election Commission currently has no intention of limiting any service or platform."

Asked about the possible date of the vote, he said the matter was not discussed in the meeting, but the announcement would be made about two months [before the polls] by the EC.

The commission also discussed the Representation of the People Order (RPO) 1972 (Amendment) Ordinance 2025.

"We have started discussions on the RPO amendments. We've reached a certain stage, and the discussions will continue next week," Sanaullah added.