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July frontliner Hadi dies

Inqilab Moncho warns of sit-in until killers arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After fighting for his life for six days, Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho, passed away at a Singapore hospital last night.

In a Facebook post around 9:40pm, Inqilab Moncho first announced the death. "In the struggle against Indian hegemony, Allah has accepted the great revolutionary Osman Hadi as a martyr."

Also an independent aspirant for Dhaka-8, Hadi was shot in the head on December 12 while he was travelling in a battery-run auto-rickshaw on Culvert Road in the capital's Paltan. He was first taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later moved to Evercare Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

On Saturday, he was airlifted to Singapore for advanced treatment.



Earlier in the day, Inqilab Moncho had said Hadi was at a crossroads of life and death, adding that his family has given consent for his surgery to be conducted in Singapore.

Warning of a sit-in in Shahbagh until the attackers are arrested, the platform said, "If Osman Hadi responds to the call of his Creator and joins the ranks of martyrs, the oppressed and freedom-seeking people of Bangladesh are requested to gather at Shahbagh to ensure sovereignty," adding that they will bring the country to standstill until the demand is met.

"If the killer flees to India, they must be arrested and brought back at any cost through discussions with the Indian government."

On Wednesday night, Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan called Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus after visiting Hadi in hospital and described his health condition as "extremely critical", the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday granted three days' remand each to Sibion Diu and Sanjay Chisim for allegedly helping Faisal Karim Masud, the prime accused in the attempted murder of Hadi, flee to India.

After they were produced before the court, Investigation Officer Faisal Ahmed sought seven days' remand, but the court allowed three days.

In the remand prayer, the DB officer said they learned from confidential sources that the named and unnamed accused in the case fled to India via the Haluaghat border in Mymensingh.

Sibion Diu is the nephew of former Awami League lawmaker Jewel Areng, he added.

IO Faisal also said the arrestees need to be questioned to determine whose planning and instructions were behind facilitating the border crossing; identify others involved in planning the attack on Hadi, including financiers and facilitators; and recover the weapons used.

Meanwhile, police are looking for another suspect named Zakir, who was seen with the prime accused and his associate Alamgir at an election campaign of Hadi days before the attack.

So far, Rapid Action Battalion, police and Border Guard Bangladesh have detained and arrested 20 people linked to the incident, including the attack and the fleeing. Some of them were released after interrogation.

Those arrested include Faisal Karim Masud's father Humayun Kabir and mother Hasi Begum; his wife Saheda Parvin Samia; Samia's elder brother Wahid Ahmed Shipu; Masud's girlfriend Maria Akter; Wahid Ahmed Shipu's friend Md Foyzal; Nuruzzaman Nomani alias Ujjal; Faisal's close associate Md Kabir; Sibion Diu; and Sanjay Chisim.

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PHOTO: ANIS MONDOL

A trader seals jars of date molasses for transport at Sarojganj bazaar in Chuadanga, the country's largest market for date molasses. Each jar holds 12-13 kilograms and sells for Tk 1,700 to Tk 2,000. Wholesalers from Dhaka and other regions source their supplies here. The photo was taken recently.

Govt assures embassy security ahead of polls

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry has assured full security for embassies and missions in Dhaka and briefed diplomats on overall security arrangements ahead of the national election scheduled for February 12 next year.

Around 40 diplomats attended the briefing led by Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam at the state guesthouse Padma yesterday afternoon.

The first half of the briefing focused on preparations for the upcoming election, while the second half centered on security assurances for diplomatic missions in Dhaka.

The foreign secretary informed the diplomats that law enforcement agencies, including the armed forces, remain vigilant in maintaining law and order.

"In this context, embassies were also assured of their security," read a foreign ministry statement issued after the diplomatic briefing.

Diplomats were further informed that the Election Commission has invited foreign observers to monitor the election.

Recently, political parties raised security concerns following the broad-daylight shooting of independent MP aspirant for Dhaka-8, Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, on December 12.

On Wednesday, the Indian Ministry

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Armed forces will be on polls duty for 5 days

EC details security plan

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission yesterday rolled out a detailed security plan to ensure a peaceful and orderly environment during the national polls and referendum, including a five-day deployment of the armed forces.

Although the armed forces are already deployed with magistracy powers, their engagement under the EC plan means they will formally act as law enforcers on election duty.

Recent amendments to the Representation of the People Order restored a 2001 provision defining armed forces personnel as law enforcers, empowering them to arrest offenders within 400 yards of polling stations for election-related or law-and-order offences. The clause had been removed in 2009.

Under the plan, announced through a set of instructions in a circular, the forces will be deployed for three days before polling, on election day on February 12, and the day after.

The armed forces had been deployed for eight to 15 days in each

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EC Instructions to Law Enforcers

Ensure safety of election officials, candidates

Enhance security at RO's offices

Protect small, marginalised communities

SEAT-SHARING BNP still keeps allies hanging

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Even though a week has passed since the announcement of the election schedule, BNP allies still do not know how many seats they might be allotted.

They said frustration is deepening within their ranks as the BNP has kept the seat-sharing issue hanging for so long.

The parties that were part of the simultaneous movement with the BNP also claimed the BNP did not hold any discussions with them before unveiling its nominees in most constituencies.

In efforts to assuage the allies, the BNP held one-to-one meetings at the party chairperson's Gulshan office with leaders of seven parties over the last two days. Earlier, it met leaders of 29 parties on December 14.

"There was not much discussion. The talks did not move forward because the BNP assumed it would not leave more than one seat to any party," Nagarik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna told The Daily Star yesterday after the meeting.

"With only one seat, what will I tell the rest of my party leaders? We told the BNP

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AIR POLLUTION CRISIS IN BANGLADESH

40% of Dhaka's air pollution originates from transboundary sources in neighboring countries



All school-going children exposed to unsafe levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in the air

The economic damage is estimated at 10% of regional GDP, due to lost productivity, healthcare costs, and reduced human capital

4 MAJOR SECTORS CONTRIBUTING TO AIR POLLUTION

INDUSTRY



HOUSEHOLD COOKING



TRANSPORT

AGRICULTURE



A concentration of 35 micrograms per cubic meter is considered hazardous, while Dhaka's air averaged 79 micrograms per cubic meter in 2024



Bangladesh tops South Asia in air pollution

Says WB report; 100% of schoolchildren affected in Dhaka, nearby areas

ASIFUR RAHMAN and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

A new World Bank report has ranked Bangladesh as South Asia's worst-hit country by air pollution, with 100 percent of schoolchildren in Dhaka and nearby areas exposed to unsafe levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5).

PM2.5 particles, which are 2.5 micrometres in diameter or smaller, are particularly harmful because of their ability to penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream.

The report, covering the Indo-Gangetic Plains region, said that around 40 percent of Dhaka's air pollution originates from transboundary sources in neighbouring countries.

Titled "A Breath of Change: Solutions for Cleaner Air in the Indo-Gangetic Plains and Himalayan Foothills", the report highlights the lack of systematic school closure protocols in Bangladesh during episodes of high air pollution.

"Air pollution routinely disrupts education, undermining student learning by impairing cognitive performance," it said. Even modest

increases in PM2.5 are linked to learning losses equivalent to several weeks of schooling.

Following Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and India also face serious risks, with between 79 and 95 percent of students exposed to hazardous air.

A PM2.5 concentration of 35 micrograms per cubic meter is considered hazardous, while Dhaka's air averaged 79 micrograms per cubic meter in 2024, according to AQAir, a Swiss air monitoring firm.

While schools in India and Pakistan often close during extreme air pollution episodes, the report notes that school closures, while protective, may not significantly reduce exposure and can cause unequal learning losses.

The report identifies four major sectors contributing to air pollution in Bangladesh -- industry, household cooking, transport, and agriculture. "While industrial and household emissions dominate, regional cooperation is crucial due to transboundary pollution."

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