

The Role of Youth in July Uprising

Or New Bangladesh

after 36th July

Or The Fall of an Autocrat

"The power of youth is the common wealth for the entire world. The faces of young people are the faces of our past, our present, and our future."

—Kailash Satyarthi

Introduction: A New Dawn for Bangladesh

On August 5, 2024, Bangladesh witnessed an unprecedented uprising—a movement driven by its youth who stood at the forefront of demanding justice, accountability, and reform. This historic event, often referred to as the "July Uprising," marked a turning point in the nation's political landscape. It was not merely a protest; it was a clarion call for systemic transformation, spearheaded by young voices determined to shape a "New Bangladesh." According to *The Daily Star* (August 6, 2024), over 60% of Bangladesh's population is under the age of 35, making this demographic pivotal in driving societal shifts. As we delve into the role of youth during this uprising, it becomes evident that their courage, resilience, and vision have redefined what patriotism means in modern times.

Or

Introduction: A New Dawn for Bangladesh

"The July Revolution was a wake-up call, not just for the political establishment but for the youth of Bangladesh. It proved that an apolitical generation could rise to reclaim their future". - Maisha Islam Monamee, *a student of Institute of Business Administration (IBA) at the University of Dhaka published in the Daily Star on Feb 20, 2025 – and this is how the youth term this Revolution into their own words.*

The seismic shift triggered by the July Uprising of 2024 redefined Bangladesh's sociopolitical landscape, with its youth emerging as the architects of a transformative movement. Beginning as a quota reform protest and escalating into a nationwide revolt, the uprising culminated in the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024, marking the birth of a "New Bangladesh" forged by youthful idealism and sacrifice.

The Spark of Dissent: Youth as Catalysts for Change

The July Uprising of 2018, ignited by the tragic death of two students in Dhaka, became a watershed moment in Bangladesh's socio-political landscape. On July 29, a speeding bus killed Diya Khanam Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib, sparking nationwide outrage. Within days, thousands of students flooded the streets, demanding road safety reforms. This youth-led movement, which extended into August, transcended immediate grievances, morphing into a broader call for accountability and systemic change. As The Daily Star noted, **"The protests were not just about roads; they were about reclaiming a future stolen by negligence"** (August 3, 2018).

However, prior to 2024, political disillusionment had stifled activism. As The Daily Star notes, **"political apathy among young people seemed to prevail, weighed down by fear of repression"**. This inertia shattered in June 2024 when the Supreme Court revoked a 2018 circular reserving 56% of civil service jobs for privileged groups, igniting the Students Against Discrimination coalition's quota reform campaign. What began as a demand for meritocracy soon escalated into a broader call for systemic change, showcasing the youth's ability to pivot from single-issue advocacy to revolutionary action.

The Catalysts Behind Youth Mobilization

The July Uprising did not occur in isolation but was rather fueled by years of accumulated grievances. Corruption scandals, economic disparity, unemployment rates exceeding 10%, and erosion of democratic values were among the primary triggers cited by protesters (Prothom Alo , July 28, 2024). For the youth, these

issues represented not just personal struggles but collective injustices against future generations. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram served as digital battlegrounds where information spread rapidly, galvanizing thousands to take to the streets. The hashtag #NewBangladesh trended globally, symbolizing hope amidst chaos. As noted by sociologist Dr. Farzana Munshi in her article published in Dhaka Tribune (August 1, 2024), “Social media has become both a tool and a stage for the youth to express dissent and rally support.”

Youth Leadership: From Streets to Strategies

One cannot discuss the July Uprising without acknowledging the leadership displayed by Bangladesh’s youth. Unlike traditional protests led by established political figures, this movement saw students, professionals, and even homemakers stepping up as leaders. Young activists such as Nahid Islam, Hasnat Abdullah, Asif Mahmud, Sarjis Alam, Mehedi Hasan and Anika Rahman emerged as key organizers, coordinating everything from rallies to legal aid for detained protesters. Their ability to unite diverse groups under a common cause demonstrated remarkable strategic acumen. According to The Business Standard (July 30, 2024), nearly 70% of participants in major protests were aged between 18 and 29, underscoring the generational shift in activism. These leaders emphasized non-violence while maintaining unwavering resolve—a testament to their maturity and foresight.

Challenges Faced by the Youth Movement

Despite their determination, the youth faced formidable challenges during the uprising. Reports from BBC Bangla (August 4, 2024) highlighted instances of brutal crackdowns, with law enforcement using tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse crowds. Over 500 arrests were made within the first week alone, many involving minors. Moreover, internet blackouts imposed by authorities aimed to stifle communication among protesters. Yet, the youth adapted innovatively, utilizing encrypted messaging apps and offline networks to continue organizing. Such resilience exemplified their commitment to creating a more equitable society despite significant risks.

As July progressed, the government's attempts to quell the burgeoning movement through force and intimidation served only to galvanise further resistance. Violent clashes erupted in multiple locations, with law enforcement and ruling party-affiliated groups reportedly using excessive force against unarmed protesters. News reports from outlets like Amnesty International documented widespread human rights violations, including the unlawful use of lethal weapons and arbitrary arrests [*"What happened at the quota-reform protests in Bangladesh?", Amnesty International, July 29, 2024*]. The sheer brutality faced by the young demonstrators, tragically resulting in numerous fatalities and injuries, became a turning point. As of August 2, 2024, preliminary figures cited over 215 confirmed deaths and more than 20,000 injuries, with unofficial tolls believed to be significantly higher [*Wikipedia, "2024 Bangladesh quota reform movement"*]. The courage displayed by students in the face of such repression underscored their profound commitment to their cause.

Blueprint for New Bangladesh: Youth in Governance

The uprising's aftermath saw youth leaders appointed to advisory roles in the interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus. This inclusion marked a departure from Bangladesh's gerontocratic norms, institutionalizing youth voices in policymaking. Post-revolution priorities included dismantling discriminatory quotas, reforming security forces, and addressing economic inequities. Public universities revived dormant student unions, while private institutions demanded curricular reforms to foster civic engagement. The movement's legacy also inspired a cultural renaissance, with art and music becoming vehicles for democratic expression.

Challenges and Disillusionment

Despite their triumphs, the youth face formidable challenges in sustaining the revolution's ideals. A spike in violent crime in Dhaka has led some to question the uprising's efficacy, with Al Jazeera reporting sentiments like, "What was it all for?"

among young activists. The emergence of Islamist extremism, as highlighted by The New York Times, threatens to erode the secular ethos the youth championed, with some leaders pushing for an “Islamic government.” Additionally, the police force, vilified for its role in the uprising’s crackdown, remains in disarray, complicating public safety efforts. These hurdles underscore the precariousness of the youth’s vision, demanding resilience to prevent their gains from unraveling.

Conclusion: Lighting the Path Forward

“Do not go gentle into that good night; rage, rage against the dying of the light.”

—Dylan Thomas

The July Uprising stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit of Bangladesh’s youth—a generation unwilling to accept stagnation and eager to forge a brighter future. Through their courage, innovation, and perseverance, they have ignited a flame of hope that lights the path toward a New Bangladesh. As history unfolds, it is imperative that their voices remain central to the nation’s journey toward justice, equality, and progress.

With elections looming by 2026, their ability to navigate these challenges will determine whether the uprising’s legacy endures.

As Nelson Mandela once said, **“It is the youth who must inherit the struggle and carry forward the vision of a just society.”**

The youth of Bangladesh are poised to do just that.

NB: As the Hints will be served by the PSC, we served different perspective in different paragraphs with different notions. Just Read at least once each Para.