

News

BCL activists create havoc at Polytechnic Instt

By Staff Correspondent

Ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday locked up the Dhaka Polytechnic Institute, Tejgaon and confined the authorities inside demanding admission of their selective candidates into the college.

College sources said that the BCL leaders submitted a list of some 100 students to the college authorities a couple of days back with a demand for their admission into the college. They also created pressure on the college authorities to admit their selected students with fake documents.

Following the college authorities' ignorance of the matter, the BCL leaders began to harass the students who were allowed in this year's admission test. They stopped many students at the college gate and snatched away their necessary papers needed to get admitted.

The BCL men also beat up a number of students who came to the college for admission purposes in the last few days, college sources said.

The situation worsened when a group of BCL leaders, led by Shawkat Hossain, Tarique Alam and Shafiq-ul Islam intercepted Munna, son of the college's vice-principal came to the college at

about 11 am yesterday. The troublemaker stopped them at the main entrance to the college and beat them up. They also beat up the elder son of the vice-principal when he tried to stop the beating.

Later, the vice-principal, Mohammad Abdur Rahman who was at his office at the time, arrived at the scene to save his sons. The vice-principal threatened the BCL men with dire consequences.

The BCL activists then brought out a procession at the college and locked up all the rooms of the college, including the rooms of the principal and vice-principal. They confined the authorities inside the institute premises for about an hour and threatened to close down the college if their demand were not met.

Tejgaon police went to the college at about 12:30 and brought the situation under control.

The college authorities filed a general diary (GD) at Tejgaon thana in this connection. The college authorities later condemned the incident at a meeting.

Police were deployed at the college as tension was mounting there following the incident.



Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha formed a human chain in front of the Foreign Ministry yesterday demanding formal apology from Pakistan for genocide committed by Pakistani Occupation Forces during the War of Liberation in 1971.

- Star photo

Dhaka asks DelhiFrom page 1
he would consider this, according to Azad.

Azad said he and Singh also discussed ways to promote South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and agreed on the need to make the grouping more active. Both sides acknowledged the usefulness of SAARC, he said.

Political analysts here say the SAARC has run into uncertainty under the shadow of tension between India and Pakistan and the last summit, which was to be held in Kathmandu, has been postponed indefinitely.

The two leaders discussed the broad parameters of major areas of interest in bilateral relations setting the stage for the two-day meeting of Bangladesh Foreign Secretary C Shafi Sami and his Indian counterpart Lalit Mansingh beginning tomorrow, official sources here said.

The foreign secretary level talks beginning tomorrow will cover security scenario and economic issues. Security issue

will be addressed.

Bangladesh wants peace and believes in peace and thus will never allow such elements on its soil," and Dhaka was alert so that such incidents cannot take place, Sheikh Hasina said.

She added that most of Bangladesh's border problems with India have been solved during her more than four years in office.

India's far eastern frontiers have become a flourishing market for South Asian gunrunners, with the region's separatist guerrilla groups purchasing huge arms consignments on a regular basis.

Most of the weapons first find their way to the Arakan, a mountainous area in Myanmar, from parts of Thailand and Cambodia.

"Many of the northeastern militant groups have opened up front companies in Thailand and other Southeast Asian capitals to serve as a smokescreen for their agents to seek arms deals," said a top army commander engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Assam.

PM: law and order

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Hasina said the culprits should be exposed and the people should remain alert against them. She also blamed the opposition parties for instructing their cadres to create a law and order situation.

Arms smuggling and troops alert

Asked about the reported attempt by a separatist group in the Indian state of Assam to smuggle arms through Bangladesh, the prime minister told journalists that her government was looking into the matter.

"As you know, we're having official talks with India on the issue. We've sent the foreign secretary (to New Delhi) to discuss the matter as well as ratification of the Indira-Mujib treaty."

She said an inquiry would be launched into the reported seizure of huge arms at Cox's Bazar. She recalled that arms were also smuggled through the Cox's Bazar border earlier and the smugglers were detained, too.

"Besides, there are some terrorist and communal groups in our country who use arms. And, the opposition parties often issue arms threats. Therefore, it is not surprising to learn about fresh incidents of arms smuggling."

The PM categorically said that no separatist group would be allowed to carry out clandestine activities in Bangladesh.

According to press reports, India put its troops on alert on

Tuesday following reports that a huge consignment of arms was being transshipped through Bangladesh to the separatist groups in its northeast.

Irfaan Raja

Asked for her comment about Pakistan's errant envoy Irfaan Raja, she said her government was awaiting his departure as the Pakistani authorities had announced his recall. The Foreign Ministry is looking into the reasons for the delay in his departure ... We'll definitely take necessary steps if the diplomat does not leave within a certain period.

"A person who made derogatory remarks about our independence cannot stay on the soil of Bangladesh. Why isn't he leaving?" she wondered.

About similar comments by journalist Gias Kamal Choudhury and Dhaka University teacher Aftab Ahmed, she said they should rather go to Pakistan out of their love for that country. The government has already taken action against the journalist, she said without elaborating.

The EC crisis

To another question about the crisis in the Election Commission, the prime minister said she should not interfere in the affairs of the Commission, which is an independent constitutional body. "We hope they (the members of the Commission) themselves will resolve the crisis. But we're ready to extend any cooperation if they

need ... there should not be any such crisis ... it's unfortunate."

She added that there had been a long struggle to introduce the provision for free and fair election under a caretaker government. But conspiracy was on to disrupt the hard-earned democratic process, she said. Hasina said the two leading opposition parties are undemocratic.

Power handover

Asked if she would hand over power after the next Independence Day, Hasina smiled and said her government would certainly celebrate the day in a befitting manner. "But the tenure of our government is up to July," she said, adding that she would hand over power at a suitable time.

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deposed president Ershad. With a note of sarcasm, she said, "Khaleda Zia who sued Ershad for corruption should now lead the movement for Ershad's release."

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The PM told another newsmen that moves were on to bring the killers of Bangabandhu back from where they have taken refuge.

Earlier, the prime minister described her nine-day visit to Italy, Germany and Switzerland as "very successful and beneficial to economic interests of the country."

"The visit has further strengthened the existing ties and created a wide scope for economic cooperation."

Slum dwellers should not be evicted

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Dr Rita Afas, Senior Research Fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said presently there is no low-cost housing in the country. Slum dwellers are not responsible for raising drug and criminal activities.

Prof Golam Rahman of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) said readymade garment factories can be shifted to different places such as Khulna and Mongla where there will be no communication problems.

CUP Chairperson Md Shahabuddin demanded specific solution to this problem. Programmes such as one like "Ghore Phera" would not help much in solving the problem, he added.

He said a study can be conducted to this end. Financial institutions can also extend loan to a low-cost high rise building for the low-income group people, such as slum dwellers or garment workers, he noted.

Speaking about short-term steps Dr Nazma Begum of the Department of Economics at Dhaka University pointed out that building low-cost houses and hostels for garment employees and providing transport for the workers can reduce to a large extent the dependence of garment workers on slums.

While relocating a garment factory, there should be low-cost accommodation arrangement

near the factory for the workers. If needed, the government should give incentive to the factory owner for building such accommodation, she added.

Before thrashing out short- and long-term solution for garment workers living in city slums, the percentage of garment workers in city slums should be sorted out, Dr Nazma observed.

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Khan Mohammad Belayet Hussain, Acting Chairman of Rajuk, said slum dwellers used to pay for the place they lived in, but hoodlums and political touts now own the property.

Pressure groups are creating obstacles for Rajuk, he said, adding that Rajuk was taking measures to evict illegal occupants. They even file cases in the court to foil Rajuk's initiatives, he mentioned.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam urged all concerned to make the housing problem of the slum dwellers a social agenda.

"Otherwise, it will not help create pressure on the government decision makers." He said attitude of the BGMEA towards the garment workers is not acceptable.

He hoped the BGMEA and garment factory owners would take immediate measures to ensure safety at the factory premises. Garment villages should be set up at different places outside Dhaka city to solve the housing problem, he added.

Tanzina Haque Hossain, National Coordinator, Life

Programme, UNDP, said the BGMEA has a social responsibility to handle issues such as housing for the workers and child labour.

Fatema Begum, resident of a slum at Kakrail, said banks are extending loan to defaulters and corrupt people. On the other hand, poor people are often harassed in getting very small amounts of bank loan.

Some other garment employees who participated in the discussion pointed out that female garment employees working in night shifts are often harassed while returning to slums from workplace.

Khurshid Alam, President of Bangladesh Garments Sramik Federation, observed that rehabilitation of slum dwellers would not be effective unless there are job opportunities for them around the place where they are rehabilitated.

Earlier, Dibalok Singh, Executive Committee Member of CUP, in his keynote paper said urbanisation in the country is growing at the rate of five to six per cent every year. More than 50 per cent of the country's population will be living in urban areas by the year 2025, he pointed out.

He said there is no employment opportunity for such large group of urban poor who are self-employed and who have given birth to an informal economy that is gaining momentum.

The government is contemplating massive eviction of slum dwellers before the NAM summit. More than 90 per cent of workers of garment factories are migrants, Singh mentioned.

Judgement

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Supreme Court will be given farewell today. Justice AM Mahmudur Rahman is going to LPR today and Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq on December 31.

Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq is being given farewell before his retirement because the court will be on vacation then.

They said the margin requirements would have far-reaching adverse repercussions on the economy. The business and industry will suffer serious working capital shortage and increased cost of funds. This will deal a severe blow to the process of economic revival.

The leaders said the manufacturing sector, which already suffers from various problems, including low capital utilisation, infrastructure problems and energy shortage, will now be faced with increased cost of funds and

working capital shortage.

On the other hand, commercial importers will also be hit hard and most of them are likely to be eliminated, as their products would not be able to compete with the goods smuggled into the country.

They strongly felt that direct and induced effects of the higher margin requirement should have been analysed more carefully keeping in view its impact on trade and industry, new investment, inflation and employment.

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