



Chhatra League leaders and activists help Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman, *left*, return to his office around 3:30pm yesterday after he was besieged by a group of protesters. *Right*, agitating students tries to break open a gate to the VC's office.



PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN

BCL men swoop on protesters

FROM PAGE 1

Several hundred BCL activists from almost all hall units and from other institutions took part in the attack, blocking all three gates of the building and beating up students at random with iron rods, cricket stumps and sticks, witnesses said.

Female BCL activists were seen beating up female students in different rooms.

"They surrounded us and attacked us from all sides without giving us any scope to speak," said Tajwar Mahmud Siam, a third-year student of mass communication and journalism.

However, BCL President Saifur Rahman Sohag denied that they swooped on agitating students.

"On the contrary, the demonstrators attacked us when we went to rescue the vice-chancellor," he told a press briefing last night at the Madhur Canteen.

The BCL also said leaders of different left-leaning organisations attacked them and harassed some of their female students.

In a press release, the DU authorities also blamed the agitators for the episode, saying some "violent students and outsiders" besieged the VC's office.

On January 11, students from different departments launched a protest, demanding that the DU cancel affiliation of seven colleges with it.

Four days later, as part of their agitation, around 100 students staged a sit-in before the VC's office. But BCL men

foiled their demo, allegedly after the VC called in the BCL men.

They harassed the female students and assaulted Moshir Rahman Sadik, coordinator of the protest. Later, the BCL men handed Sadik over to the university authorities who subsequently handed him over to the police.

On January 17, students under the banner of "Students against repression" started a fresh protest, demanding punishment of the BCL men for the assault.

That day the agitating students broke down a gate of the Arts Building and kept the proctor confined inside his office for four hours. Later, the VC assured them of meeting their demands and formed a committee to investigate the January 15 incident.

The next day, the university authorities filed a case against 50 unnamed students for breaking down the gate and formed a committee to probe the incident, fuelling the protest.

"BEAT US MERCILESSLY"

Yesterday, the students first formed a human chain on the base of Aparajevo Bangla and then brought out a procession on the campus to press home their four-point demand -- punishment of BCL men for the January 15 incident, withdrawal of the case, removal of the proctor for his alleged anti-student stance and solve the crisis over the affiliation of seven colleges.

Around 12:00pm, they besieged the VC's office after breaking down three

gates -- the main entrance of the Registrar Building and two others inside. The VC was holding a meeting inside.

They wanted the VC to assure them of taking steps to meet their demands.

But as he was leaving his office around 2:30pm without talking to the students, the protestors blocked his way, and placed their demands.

The VC then assured them of taking action regarding the January 15 assault following due process, and said it would take time.

"All our activities will be conducted as per the University Ordinance of 1973. There will be no deviation from the rule of law," he said.

The students insisted that the case be withdrawn and Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani removed immediately. But the VC did not make any clear statement, and kept saying the same thing. The students kept him confined there.

Then around 3:30pm, some 100 BCL leaders and activists led by Jakir and Abid came there.

As they tried to escort the VC away, a scuffle broke out between them and the agitating students.

The BCL men, however, managed to take the VC inside his office and locked the gate of his room from outside.

In the meantime, several hundred BCL activists from different halls, and even from Dhaka College and Dhaka city units, joined in and took position around the building.

As the agitators kept trying to get in

touch with the VC, the BCL men launched the attack on them. Some students took shelter in several rooms in fear.

The agitators tried to leave the building, but the Chhatra League men caught them and beat them wherever they found, leaving many wounded.

Two correspondents of this newspaper were present there.

Female Chhatra League activists, led by Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall unit President Benjeer Hossain Nishi, Ruqaiyyah Hall unit President BM Lipi Akter, Kuwait Moitri Hall unit President BM Farida Parvin and General Secretary Srabony Shaila were seen beating up female students and tearing up their dresses.

"They beat us mercilessly, irrespective of gender," said Meherunnahar Meghla, a student who became unconscious during the attack.

As the BCL activists besieged the entire area, the protesters, especially female ones, could not leave the area and got beaten up.

The injured students include Masud Al Mahdi, Sezan Ahmed Jim, Abu Raihan, Sumaiya Arefin Orni, Anobik Onalib and Tunazeena Jahan.

Chhatra Union General Secretary Liton Nandi, Chhatra Union President of DU unit Tuhin Kanti Das, and Chhatra Federation President of DU unit Umme Habiba Benazir also suffered injuries.

Two DU Correspondents -- Mir

Arshadul Haque of The Independent and Arifur Rahman of New Age -- were beaten up by BCL men of Jagannath Hall and Bangabandhu Hall. The two were covering the incident.

Of them, Arshadul was admitted to DMCH with critical condition. Arifur took treatment at the DU Medical Centre.

Contacted for comment, VC's personal assistant picked up the call twice, saying, "Sir is in an important meeting."

Talking to the reporters after the incident, DU Proctor AKM Golam Rabbani said, "We will surely ensure punishment for the perpetrators based on evidence. No one will be spared."

DU PRESS RELEASE

In a press release, the DU authorities said some agitating students of the university and some outsiders launched a pre-planned attack in the name of demonstration.

Demonstrators, including some outsiders, took position in front of VC's office around 12:00pm, breaking down three gates with rods and cutters. They also chanted offensive slogans about the vice-chancellor, proctor and other teachers, it said.

Members of the proctorial team asked the agitators to send a delegation to the VC to discuss the issue but they did not pay any heed, and continued their violent activities, obstructing academic and administrative activities of the university, the release added.

At one stage, the agitating students

barred the VC from joining a meeting of Board of Advanced Studies in front of his office.

"VC Prof Akhtaruzzaman listened to their demands and assured them of taking steps after probing the incident and following due procedures, but the demonstrators rejected his assurance and continued hurling abusive words," it said.

"A group of teachers, university staff, officials and members of the proctorial body then rescued the VC from there by forming a human shield and took him to his office, when the protestors swooped on him."

Terming the incident "pre-planned", the authorities sought help from teachers, students and journalists.

The university authorities also formed a five-member committee to investigate the incident.

The committee, headed by DU Treasurer Prof Kamal Uddin, was asked to submit its report as soon as possible.

BCL PRESS RELEASE

In a press release, the BCL alleged that leaders of different left-leaning students' organisation attacked them and harassed some of their female leaders when they went to escort the VC, leaving some their leaders injured.

They also placed a five-point demand, including suspension of the students from the university, who broke the gate and "attacked the VC," and punishment of those who wants to create instability on the campus.

PM, Speaker meet ahead of presidential election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury last night held a meeting at the latter's office in parliament.

The PM, also leader of the House, entered the Speaker's office around 9:00pm and came out around 10:30pm.

Asked about the topics discussed, Shirin told reporters that they spoke about many issues, including allocation of budget for parliament secretariat and improvement of Sangsad TV programmes.

The Speaker said, "It is a normal meeting. It was supposed to be held at the Gono Bhavan, but it was held at parliament."

Asked whether the PM discussed with her about the upcoming presidential election, the Speaker replied in the negative.

Shirin, however, said the chief election commissioner yesterday sought an appointment to meet her to discuss the presidential polls. "The meeting will be held at 3:00pm tomorrow [today] at my office."

BSF member suspended for 'assaulting' Bangladeshi woman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kolkata

A BSF man has been suspended over the molestation of a Bangladeshi woman on Dhaka-bound Moitree Express train from Kolkata on Monday morning.

A press release of India's Border Security Force said Constable Veeranna Bhavi of 99 Battalion BSF was found involved in the incident after inquiry.

The BSF is extending all cooperation to the railway authorities for

It's a PR ploy by Myanmar

FROM PAGE 1

As per the plan, Rohingya would be first accommodated in temporary camps in Rakhine before their homes are rebuilt.

However, the plan does not guarantee Rohingyas' citizenship in Myanmar where they have been denied the right and other basic rights including health, education and right to movement.

Bangladesh's Rohingya Refugee Rehabilitation Commissioner Abul Kalam said it would take some time for the officials to prepare the list of people to be sent to Myanmar for verification and setting up of transit camps within Bangladesh.

Ko Ko Naing, director general of Myanmar's Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, told Reuters they are ready to accept the refugees once they go back.

The international community, however, said as of now, the necessary safeguards for potential returnees are absent, and there are continued restrictions on access for aid agencies, the media and other independent observers.

At the same time, refugees from Myanmar continue to arrive in Bangladesh, UN Refugee Agency said yesterday amid reports that a huge fire burned houses and gunshots were heard in a village across the border in Rakhine on Monday evening.

It is believed the homes ablaze overnight belonged to Rohingyas, reports AFP, quoting a senior

Bangladesh border official in Cox's Bazar as saying.

"The fire is designed to destroy the last remaining traces of Rohingya homes so that none of us can return to our villages," Rafique bin Habib, a Rohingya activist told AFP yesterday.

HRW said the Myanmar government has systematically oppressed the Rohingya Muslim population, and has a poor record for treating Rohingya displaced by past abuses or of providing sustainable conditions for their return.

Over 120,000 Rohingya who fled ethnic cleansing in 2012 remain in supposedly "temporary" camps in central Rakhine State, HRW said.

"All indications suggest the planned Burmese camps for Rohingya will be open-air prisons," Brad Adams said.

Protecting the returning refugees will not be possible without significant monitoring efforts by international observers, he said, adding that there was a dire situation in Maungdaw Township, where "large areas have been razed and flattened by bulldozers, most stores are shuttered and a few people are on the streets..."

Under international standards, refugees should be provided with objective, up-to-date, and accurate information about conditions in areas of return. They need a genuine choice between staying or returning, HRW said.

It also urged Bangladesh and

Myanmar to renegotiate the repatriation deal for voluntary, safe, and sustainable returns.

"Instead of underwriting forced returns, donors should demand that Burma ensures international participation in any return plan," Adams said.

Meanwhile, the UNHCR yesterday said implementing the recommendations of the Rakhine Advisory Commission --- inter-communal dialogue, freedom of movement, access to livelihoods, citizenship for Muslim communities -- were essential for building confidence for return of the Rohingyas.

"Without this, the risk of dangerous and rushed returns into a situation where violence might reignite is too great to be ignored," said UNHCR, which has not been so far included in the refugee repatriation discussions for objections from Myanmar.

It called on Myanmar to allow unhindered humanitarian access in Rakhine, allowing assessment of the conditions and the long-term viability of the returns as well as help address the legitimate safety concerns for the refugees contemplating their return.

UNHCR said it remains prepared to work with both governments towards finding a long-term solution to this crisis in the interest of the refugees, of the governments, the host community in Bangladesh and all communities in Rakhine State.

Villagers kill tiger after it injures 6

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On information, Gulishkhali Forest Station Officer Sheikh Khairul Islam reached the spot and took the carcass of a six-foot-long tiger to the Zeaudhara Forrest Camp, Mahmudul said.

He added tigers enter the villages because the adjacent Bhola river has dried up and the animals cannot distinguish between the forest and the locality. When the rivers around the Sundarbans would be properly excavated the problem would be solved, he observed.

"We have already warned the villagers about tigers coming out of the forest. We advised them to move carefully and make noise to send the tigers back to the forest," he said.

Kamrul Hasan, station officer of

Chandpai station, said, "Roaming of tigers has increased also in Baidyamari area for a few days. We have alerted the people around the forest in this regard."

He termed it a good sign and claimed the number of tigers is increasing.

However, experts have expressed concerns over the depleting Bengal tiger population in the Sundarbans as the number of tiger attacks in and around the world's largest mangrove forest has gone down significantly in recent years.

They said tigers earlier used to enter nearby populated areas apparently for food, which indicated the forest was in bad health. But only a few tiger attacks were reported in recent months.

Govt reopens

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hundreds of thousands of so-called "Dreamers" brought to America as children, many of them illegally. They had been protected from deportation under an Obama-era program known as DACA, which Trumps wants to end.

With Democratic support, a bill keeping the government funded until February 8 easily passed the Senate, where different versions of the funding had languished for days.

Word of the compromise deal struck in Washington sent US stocks surging to new highs.

Earlier, the White House appeared in no mood for bipartisanship or magnanimity after a shutdown that overshadowed Trump's first anniversary in office.

Trump moved to undercut Democrats, saying he would only accept a comprehensive immigration reform -- one that notably addresses his demands for a border wall with Mexico as well as the fate of the "Dreamers."

"We will make a long-term deal on immigration if, and only if, it is good for our country," he said in a statement.

And in a tweet late Monday, he again cried victory over the Democrats.

"Big win for Republicans as Democrats cave on Shutdown," he wrote on Twitter.

Trump added: "Now I want a big win for everyone, including Republicans, Democrats and DACA, but especially for our Great Military and Border Security. Should be able to get there. See you at the negotiating table!"

In a sign of the poisoned politics of Washington, when top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer announced his party would vote with Republicans to end the shutdown he also pilloried Trump.

"The White House refused to engage in negotiations over the weekend. The great deal-making president sat on the sidelines," Schumer said.

Trump spent the weekend stewing at the White House when he had planned to be among friends and family at his home in Mar-a-Lago, Florida for his anniversary bash.

And with the fundamental row on immigration and funding of Trump's border wall unresolved, Republicans

and Democrats may very well find themselves back in a similar stalemate come February 9.

HIGH-PROFILE HOLDOUTS

Schumer told Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that he expected Republicans to make good on a pledge to address Democrats' concerns over the Deferred Action on Child Arrivals (DACA) program. This shields immigrants brought to the country as children from deportation but expires on March 5.

There are an estimated 700,000 "Dreamers" whose fates are up in the air.

"If he does not, of course, and expect he will, he will have breached the trust of not only the Democratic senators but members of his own party as well," Schumer said.

Trump has staked his political fortunes on taking a hard line on immigrants, painting them as criminals and scoundrels.

Senator Tim Kaine summed up the view of the more optimistic Democrats: "We got a commitment that I feel very, very good about."

But if no progress is made on an immigration bill, Molly Reynolds of the Brookings Institution warned, "Democrats still have the ability to potentially force another shutdown over the issue."

The House is under no obligation to pass any Senate bill generated as a result of McConnell's pledge to cooperate with Democrats -- although Speaker Ryan did say his chamber needs to "move forward in good faith" on DACA and immigration.

DEALMAKER ON SIDELINES

Ahead of the deal, Trump had goaded Democrats from the sidelines, accusing them of shutting down the government to win concessions on immigration, in service of "their far left base."

There have been four government shutdowns since 1990. During the last one, in October 2013, more than 800,000 government workers were put on temporary leave.

Essential federal services and the military were operational on Monday.