

LETTER TO PM

BCL says sorry for 'mistakes'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chhatra League General Secretary Golam Rabbani has written to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, apologising to her for the student body's all "known and unknown mistakes".

In a letter dated September 11, he said, "Forgive us and give us the chance to correct the mistakes so that we can repay the trust that you put in us. We have nowhere to go if you turn your back on us."

Rabbani gave copies of the letter, written on the BCL's official pad, to four AL leaders to forward those to Hasina. The leaders are tasked with supervising the activities of the student body, said AL sources.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter that carries Rabbani's name.

In the letter, Rabbani said that soon after they took charge of the BCL, the path towards a positive change became thorny due to pressure from various quarters, non-cooperation from the immediate past (BCL) leaders, various conspiracies and obstacles as well as their intentional and unintentional mistakes.

Admitting their failure to behave responsibly, he told the PM, "Leader, your children [BCL leaders and activists] are not that bad, we have fallen victim to conspiracies time and again."

He also gave explanations for three complaints raised against them.

On the first complaint that the BCL

office at the AL headquarters was untidy, Rabbani said it was totally baseless.

He alleged that people were hired to throw garbage at the washroom and walls there.

The BCL leader then explained why he could not arrive at a programme at Jagannath University on July 20. He said he was late by around 40 minutes, and it was unintentional. The home minister, who was the chief guest at the programme, had been informed about it.

Rabbani said he, along with BCL President Rezwani Haque Chowdhury Shovon, had gone to Madaripur the previous day to attend a programme marking the death anniversary of his mother.

They returned to the capital at 9:00am on July 20.

He further said, "The allegation that we wake up late in the morning is exaggerated. We attended all programmes of the Awami League and Chhatra League, and duly performed our duties."

About the third complaint regarding Jahangirnagar University (JU), Rabbani said the issue was presented before the PM in "a different manner".

He said they went to the residence of the JU vice-chancellor after being asked by the VC.

"... we made some comments which were inappropriate. We apologise for that," he said referring to a conversation with the VC.

We demanded

FROM PAGE 1 choosing, she said, adding that she was under treatment there at the time.

Shovon and another BCL leader accompanied Rabbani there, while several dozen BCL men waited downstairs, she added.

Prof Farzana, who was appointed as VC for a second straight term last year, said she met the PM on Tuesday evening and discussed the ongoing protest, the development projects and issues related to the central BCL.

"We talked for over 30 minutes. At the meeting, we talked about Chhatra League President Rezwani Haque Chowdhury Shovon and General Secretary Golam Rabbani.

"The PM said: They [Shovon-Rabbani] put you in trouble too," Prof Farzana said, adding that the PM asked her not to worry.

"If the Jahangirnagar University does not want the development project, we will not release the money. But there should not be any protest over this," the VC quoted the PM as saying.

Quoting the VC, Bangla daily Jugantor yesterday published a similar version of the conversion between Hasina and Prof Farzana.

Asked why she did not inform the PM of the matter earlier, the VC said, "I informed some Awami League leaders and also secretaries, but didn't tell the prime minister at first, as she was busy."

After the matter hit headlines, Rabbani had sent four of his followers to the VC's residence on Monday night to offer an apology for the misconduct, but the VC did not meet them, BCL sources told The Daily Star.

Teachers and students have been demonstrating on the campus since August 23, after allegations surfaced that the VC gave a huge amount of money to some BCL leaders.

At least 10 leaders and activists of JU BCL earlier told this paper that they got their share from the money handed over to three factions of the student body after their meeting with

the VC on August 9.

VC GAVE TK 1.6 CRORE TO JU BCL In a letter addressed to the PM, Rabbani said the allegations against the top BCL leadership was exaggerated.

"The Jahangirnagar University VC's husband and son used the university's Chhatra League unit to strike a deal to get a hefty commission and they gave the Jahangirnagar University Chhatra League unit Tk 1.6 crore before Eid-Ul-Azha," Rabbani wrote to Hasina.

It was not immediately clear if the PM received the letter.

As the news spread, the VC called them over to her office, he said, although the VC denied the claim.

"We met the VC and asked her why they gave money to Jahangirnagar University Chhatra League without their [BCL president and general secretary] knowledge. Then she felt embarrassed. At the time, we told her something that was not right. We are sorry for that," says the handwritten letter, signed by Rabbani.

The VC termed the allegation false.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Rabbani said he came to know about the Tk 1.6 crore bribe from the JU BCL.

"The boys [BCL leaders and activists] have been coming to me and telling me: brother, this is what happened. There is no one in Jahangirnagar who does not know it. Everybody on the campus knows it," he said.

"Later, Shovon and I went to the vice-chancellor and told her: Mam, you have given them money. Where is our fair share? Where is our Eid bonus?" Rabbani said by phone.

"They [the university authorities] did not give us any money, but gave money to people who are under our leadership. What does she [VC] say about that? They did not give us anything. They gave money to the Jahangirnagar University Chhatra League. Does it make any sense?" he said, sounding frustrated.

[Our Dhaka University correspondent contributed to this report]

Afif blitz leads Tigers to win

FROM PAGE 1 Zimbabwe bowlers attack. He registered his maiden T20I fifty in just his second game after failing on his debut against Sri Lanka last year when he was passed for a duck.

Afif and Mosaddek added a match-winning 82-run seventh-wicket stand before the left-hander was dismissed just three runs shy of the target after scoring a 26-ball 52.

Mosaddek remained unbeaten on a 24-ball 30 which featured two sixes as Bangladesh returned to winning ways following a humiliating defeat in the one-off Test against Afghanistan earlier this month.

Bangladesh were in a world of trouble in their chase as they kept losing wickets at regular intervals.

Despite a confident start, Liton Das was first to depart. Although he tried to make some room, he was bowled by a brilliant yorker from pacer Tendai Chatara for 19.

Kyle Jarvis then removed both Soumya Sarkar and Mushfiqur Rahim in the same over. To make matters worse, skipper Shakib Al Hasan fell for just one run in the next over when he edged to a slip fielder to become Chatara's second victim.

Mahmudullah Riyad tried to initiate a rescue mission but could only score 14 before he was given leg-before and burnt a review off the bowling of leg-spinner Ryan Burl.

Burl had a great outing and, after a blistering fifty, he took a magnificent catch flying towards his left at deep midwicket to get rid of Sabbir Rahman.

Before the exchange, a sensational burst of boundaries from Burl had rescued Zimbabwe and lifted them to

a position of strength after Bangladesh won the toss and asked the visitors to bat.

After being reduced to 63 for five, Zimbabwe scored 63 runs off the last four overs -- with Burl hitting 30 of the 16th over from Shakib -- to reach 144 for five in the reduced 18-overs-a-side match. The reduction in overs was due to the start being delayed by 90 minutes owing to a wet outfield.

After the first 10 overs, Bangladesh were dominating proceedings as the top half of the Zimbabwe batting line-up surrendered meekly.

Debutant Taijul Islam got a wicket off his very first ball in T20I cricket, getting opener Brendan Taylor caught at third man in the second over.

A 44-run second-wicket stand between skipper Hamilton Masakadza and Craig Ervine gave little clue of what was to follow, and it all started with the latter holing out off pacer Mustafizur Rahman to leave the score on 51 for two.

Part-time off-spinner Mosaddek Hossain and pacer Mohammad Saifuddin then took a wicket each and the run out of Timyem Maruma reduced Zimbabwe to 63 for five in the 10th over.

Burl and Tinotenda Mutombodzi then dug in and rebuilt, before the former unleashed three sixes and three fours off Shakib to take the sting out of the Tigers.

The display of power seemed to have

caused a power failure as, an over later, the floodlights went out, causing a five-minute delay. Upon resumption, the pair remained unbeaten and took the visitors to a score that seemed unlikely

an hour before.

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The dam in Kakunkhai area of Sylhet's Gowainghat chokes the Baulikhal river. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Killing a river for a road

FROM PAGE 1

as they needed better communication across the Baulikhal, said Golam Kibria Helal, general secretary of Gowainghat Awami League, who was chairman of the union parishad at the time.

The rest of the money was funded by the union parishad, upazila chairman and local lawmaker.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Sylhet Chapter, said laws and regulations regarding dam construction were not followed while constructing the dam.

He added that nearly 50,000 people in the upazila are being deprived of a freshwater source due to the dam.

Zahirul Islam, section officer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) in Sylhet, said, "The

board knew nothing about the construction of the dam. If we were informed, we could have stopped the construction and suggested a suitable and appropriate alternative."

Former UP chairman Golam Kibria Helal said, "I supported the dam construction considering the communication problem.

"We knew about the laws regarding rivers but how could we call this a river? Water flew only during monsoon and it stayed dry during the rest of the year. We believe that we did the right thing."

Meanwhile, the primary findings of a study, conducted last year in Gowainghat by the Institute of Water and Flood Management (IWFM) of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, showed the negative impact of the

dam on the local ecosystem, BWDB officials said.

The study, titled "Feasibility Study for Flood Control, Drainage and Irrigation System at Gowainghat in Sylhet District", recommended removal of the dam.

BWDB Executive Engineer Sahiduzzaman Sarkar said, "The IWFM is yet to provide the final report of the study. We will remove the dam after getting the report. We are considering proposing the construction of a structure that will allow the river to flow as well as maintain road communication."

On September 3, environmentalists held a rally on the bank of the Rangpani river in Jaintiapur upazila, urging the government to take prompt steps to remove the dam.

Home now wants to scrutinise list

FROM PAGE 1

Lines in February. Last year, 182 police and Rab officials got the honour.

Many were critical of the selection, saying a number of competent officers have been left out while those close to the police administration were awarded.

The ministry did not say anything about the rationale behind the committee formation, but its May 2 letter reads, "The Police Headquarters must send the list of 90 law enforcers selected for the awards to the ministry along with the citations."

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

Contacted, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan on September 2 said, "The Police Headquarters will make the list and the ministry-formed committee will just check whether anyone is omitted or there is any mistake."

The Bangladesh Police Medal (BPM) and President Police Medal (PPM) gallantry Awards were introduced in 1976. The BPM and PPM service awards were initiated through another notification on March 8, 1999.

According to two notifications issued on January 9, 1976, BPM and PPM shall be awarded to the members of the police force within the territories of Bangladesh who have performed acts of gallantries. And the awards shall be given only on recommendation to the president by the inspector general of police through the ministry of home.

The latest gazette notification issued by the home ministry says each BPM awardee will get a one-off allowance of Tk 1 lakh and Tk 1,500 monthly. For BPM (service), it will be one-off Tk 75,000 and Tk 1,000 monthly.

A PPM awardee will get one-off Tk 75,000 and Tk 1,500 monthly while a PPM (service) awardee will get one-off Tk 50,000 and Tk 1,000 monthly.

The awardees will continue to get the monthly allowance during the service period and even after retirement.

The police officials said the practice has so far been that the ministry without having any say about the list forwards it to the president for his approval. But now the ministry has formed a committee just to exert its authority over the force, they added.

Contacted on August 27, deputy secretary of the ministry, Farjana Jesmin, who sent the letter to the IGP, said there is no law that says the ministry cannot form committee to scrutinise the list provided by the IGP.

"It [the ministry] will in no way interfere in police activities We will not be limiting the jurisdiction of the police committee that nominates the awardees," she added.

Referring to the Police Act, she said the inspector general of police will carry out administrative job and the government will supervise the police force.

Another official at the Public Security Division of the ministry, preferring anonymity, said, "They

[police] will give the award, but there should be a body to scrutinise who are getting the awards and for which roles. If not, then what is use of the ministry?

"Ninety people are supposed to get the awards. The honourable president can increase the number to a certain level. But you know how many were awarded last time."

He further said they often face questions from the offices of the president and the prime minister when the ministry forwards the police proposal for such a big number of awardees. "It hurts us," he added.

As per the ministry order, additional secretary (police and NTMC) of the ministry will be the convener while the joint secretary (Police-1) of Public Security Division will be the member secretary.

The members are a joint secretary of the Cabinet Division, a joint secretary of Finance Division, joint secretary (administration) of Public Security Division and a deputy inspector general from the Police Headquarters.

He added that the two were accused in at least five cases, including Faruk murder, and they were on the run.

The OC said acting on a tip-off that some Rohingya criminals were hiding on a hill at Jadiimura of Hnila, a police team, led by him, raided the spot.

Sensing the police presence, the criminals opened fire and the law enforcers retaliated in "self-defence", he claimed.

After the "gun battle", police found two bullet-hit men and took them to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex. As their condition was critical, on-duty doctors referred them to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, dismissed the OC.

They were declared dead after being taken to the hospital around 5:00am, he said.

Three policemen were hurt in the incident and they took first aid, the OC said, claiming that two homemade firearms and seven bullets were recovered from the spot.

Two cases were filed with Teknaf Police Station in connection with yesterday's incident, the OC added.

In Kushtia, suspected drug peddler Sujon Malitha, 30