

# Berlin backs off climate targets as protests heat up

AFP, Berlin

Opposition leaders and environment activists yesterday condemned German Chancellor Angela Merkel's government for watering down a new climate protection law, as "Extinction Rebellion" protestors blocked traffic in Berlin.

Key elements of a September climate deal struck within Merkel's coalition government were absent from a draft law published by the environment ministry, including a binding goal of "climate neutrality" by 2050 and a powerful oversight role for an independent commission of experts.

"This is an anti-democratic scandal for climate policy," Left party MP Lorenz Goesta Beutin told AFP, adding that Germany now risked breaching the 2015 Paris Agreement, which committed almost all countries to reducing climate-altering carbon emissions.

Even within the coalition, some among Merkel's junior partners the social democrats (SPD) were riled by the draft law, set to be passed to parliament by ministers Wednesday.

"If (Merkel's conservatives) further weaken the climate package, it will be nothing more than a paper tiger," said

Karl Lauterbach, a left-wing contender in the SPD's leadership race.

Defending its draft law, the environment ministry pointed to carbon dioxide (CO2) reduction goals across economic sectors -- principally transport, construction, agriculture and waste -- that will tighten annually until 2030.

Germany is "especially ambitious" among EU member nations in its CO2 targets, Merkel's chief of staff Helge Braun told ZDF public television.

"The climate protection law that we will pass in the coming days will anchor exactly these national climate goals for 2030" which the country committed to in Paris, he added.

Berlin has been under pressure to make its climate measures more credible.

Ministers have acknowledged the country will fail in its aim to reduce emissions by 40 percent of 1990 levels by next year, while tens of thousands of young people have taken to the streets every week for months in "Fridays for Future" demonstrations.

But Merkel's coalition of centre-right conservatives and centre-left social democrats are keen to preserve social peace, with an eye on "yellow vest" protests that hobbled France last year over higher fuel taxes.

## I don't know

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"He told me he reached the university hall," she said, adding that she had repeatedly called him her after 9:00pm but her calls were not received.

"I woke up for morning prayers and saw Abrar's father weeping. I asked him why he was crying. He said someone from our son's hall called him and said there was some problem and that he needed to go to Dhaka immediately."

Abrar went to his Kushtia home on September 24 with his younger brother and had planned to stay with his parents till October 20.

"But he left on Sunday morning due to academic pressure," a relative said.

Abrar completed his primary education at Kushtia Mission School and then completed his secondary schooling from Kushtia Zilla School. He got his higher secondary degree from Notre Dame College, family sources said.

Abrar was accepted in six universities but he decided to go to Buet.

Abrar was religious since he was a child but was never involved in Shibir politics, the sources added.

"The whole family are supporters of the Awami League," said Abrar's uncle Mizanur Rahman.

Abrar's father Barkatullah lives next door to Mahbubul Alam Hanif,

a lawmaker of Kushtia-3 and also the joint general secretary of the Awami League.

Barkatullah said his father Abdul Gafur was an influential AL activist in the district's Kumarkhali upazila.

Ariful Islam, a former BCL activist and now a data-entry operator of Kushtia Islamic University, said, "With Abdul Gafur, we took part in different Awami League programmes."

Ariful is a neighbour of Abrar's grandfather Abdul Gafur.

"We only knew Abrar as a meritorious student and always engaged with studies [and was not involved in politics]," said Shariful Islam, a teacher of Kushtia Islamic University and also Abrar's neighbour.

Rateen Ullah Mridha, a friend of Abrar and a student of Kushtia Islamic University, said that though Abrar never showed any interest in politics, he told them his family had an AL background.

When Rokeya was asked about wanting justice for her son's murder, she was silent for some time. She stopped crying and asked who would give her justice.

"I ask you all to bring my son back to me alive. I don't need justice."

Abrar's ancestral home is located in Kumarkhali upazila's Koya village in Kushtia. His father left the village and the family shifted to Kushtia town's PTTI Road around 11 years ago.

## This kind of violence

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Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology.

He was found dead inside his dormitory after ruling party-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League men allegedly questioned and assaulted him on suspicion of his involvement with Islami Chhatra Shibir.

At 5:32pm on October 5, the day Bangladesh and India signed several agreements, including India's withdrawal of 1.82 cusecs of water from the Feni River, Abrar Fahad posted a Facebook status drawing on three historical examples, in which he claimed Bangladesh failed to protect its interest -- use of ports, water sharing, and export of energy resources to the neighbouring country.

Serajul said, "I think that there is a presence of intolerance in our society and people hardly tolerate dissenting voices. But if a similar situation exists at universities, it means we are heading towards darkness."

The veteran professor, who is 83-years old, said such violence was unheard of.

"It is taking place under the patronage of the ruling party-backed student organisation. It is the government's duty to keep them under control, but they cannot do it. They [the government] cannot control the ruling party's youth front who are involved in illegal casino business [as well]. Their student wing is out of control. This is really unfortunate."

Serajul said Buet was peaceful for the last few years. Such a killing inside the hall means fellow students are the main suspects.

"It indicates intolerance. It is an example of suppression of free speech and dissent. This is alarming."

Any citizen can raise their voice on any major political or other issues. There should be differing opinions on various topics, the professor said.

"If students kill a fellow student for this reason, it means there is an existence of low tolerance in our society."

He said intolerance at universities is the result of an unhealthy atmosphere on campus.

"There is no place for dissent. The ruling party men dominate the campus

and control everything unilaterally. If there was a democratic environment, this would not have happened."

Public universities used to have healthy environments, tolerance, democratic practices, and cultural activities because there were regular student union elections through which students could express their opinions, he said.

"But student union elections at public universities have been absent for decades," he added.

Although the DU had an election recently, it was not proper and created controversy. The Ducsu general secretary was suspended from his own organisation for corruption, he said.

"Legal punishment for crime is not enough as a remedy. A total change in the campus atmosphere is vital for changing the situation. Active and vibrant student unions and a culture of democratic practices will be the key to that change."

Activities of the vice chancellors are other aspects.

Such corruption at public universities was never heard of. They have no accountability for their actions.

The VCs should be held accountable if students were not able to express their opinions, he added.

## The Arrestees

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of chemical engineering batch-18 and Tanvir Ahmed of mechanical engineering batch-17 are members. NINE MORE ACCUSED

Abrar's father Barkat Ullah filed a case last night accusing 19 Buet students including the aforesaid ones.

The other accused students are Moniruzzaman Monir of water resources engineering, Hossain Mohammad Toha of mechanical engineering, Mohammad Mazedul Islam of water resources engineering, Md Zisan of electrical and electronic engineering, Md Akash of chemical engineering, Shamem Billah of naval architecture and marine engineering, Md Shadat of mechanical engineering, Md Morshed of mechanical engineering and Md Moyaz of computer science and engineering.



Clockwise from left, Rokeya Khatun, mother of murdered Buet student Abrar Fahad, being consoled by her relatives at their home on PTTI road in Kushtia. Dhaka University students march demanding punishment to those involved in the murder. Empty bottles of alcohol on a table in Room 2011, the apparent torture cell of BCL.



PHOTO: STAR/AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Buet student beaten to death

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deputy commissioner of Lalbagh division.

Talking to this newspaper, police and one of Abrar's roommates said Abrar returned to his room at Sher-e-Bangla Hall from his home in Kushtia around 5:30pm on Sunday.

He was studying when some BCL activists of the dormitory suddenly asked him to come out after 7:00pm.

"I was also studying and I thought they were calling Abrar for something very casual. I did not suspect anything bad," Abrar's roommate Shaikat said.

Wishing not to be named, another student of the hall, said the BCL leaders in question instructed some third-year students of the dormitory to take Abrar to room number 2011, where he was assaulted.

Talking to reporters, Buet BCL leaders said Abrar was called for "questioning" over his alleged involvement with Shibir, student front of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Abrar's family members said he had nothing to do with Jamaat or Shibir.

Ashikul Islam Bitu, assistant secretary of Buet BCL, said, "Abrar was called in to room number 2011 [on the first floor]."

He said Abrar was quizzed by Mujtaba Rafid, deputy office secretary of Buet BCL; Ify Mosharrif Shakal, social welfare secretary; and Amit Shaha, deputy law secretary, of the same unit.

Later, some fourth-year students were asked to go to the room. Buet BCL Sports Secretary Meftahul Islam Zion, Information and Research Secretary Anik Sharkar also went there, he said.

"At one stage, I left the room. Maybe, they beat him up after that. Later around 3:00am, I heard that Abrar was dead," said Bitu.

Students found Abrar's body on the staircase between the ground floor and the first floor around 2:30am yesterday. They called the hall provost and the resident doctor who declared him dead. The authorities then informed the matter to police, said Kamal Hossain, DMP additional

deputy commissioner of Lalbagh division.

According to DB sources, Buet BCL's Publication Affairs Secretary Ishtiaque Munna, a student of the mechanical engineering department, was the first to notice the Facebook post of Abrar.

In the post, uploaded at 5:32pm on October 5, Abrar apparently criticised some recent agreements with India on the use of Mongla Port, water sharing and gas export.

Munna told six other BCL leaders of batches 16 and 17 to take Abrar to room number 2011. Two of them, from batch 17, followed the order, the sources said.

As Abrar stepped inside the room, BCL leaders took away his mobile phone. They checked his Facebook, messenger and started interrogating him.

They slapped him and then started beating him mercilessly, said DB officials, quoting the arrestees.

Abrar eventually passed out. Then they took him to a nearby room (room number 2005) which belonged to Munna. After Abrar's condition worsened, they left him in the staircase, the sources said.

Some students of the hall said Mujtaba Rafid, Ify Mosharrif Shakal, Amit Shaha and Prottoy Mubin live in room number 2011.

Amit, Rafid, Ify and some third-year students were present at the room when Abrar was beaten, they said.

A Buet physician, Dr Mashuk Elahi, told reporters, "Some students of the hall called me over my phone around 3:00am. Abrar was dead by the time I found his body at the staircase."

As the news spread, hundreds of Buet students took position in front of the provost office, demanding immediate arrest and punishment of the killers.

They alleged a video clip of a CCTV installed at the hall was missing and demanded that the footage be shown to everyone.

Later in the evening, the footage

went viral. It shows three youths, believed to be Buet students, carrying Abrar on a corridor and taking him towards the staircase.

A youth is seen walking next to them while six others are behind.

It is not clear whether Abrar was dead or alive at that time.

Meanwhile, Buet authorities have formed a probe committee, comprising several teachers, to investigate the murder.

In a press release, the authorities said a general diary was filed with Chawk Bazar Police Station in connection with the murder.

Last night, Chhatra League expelled 11 leaders and activists of the Buet unit on charges of their involvement in an "unfortunate" incident.

Most of the accused were arrested.

### INJURY MARKS

Following autopsy, Sohel Mahmud, head of forensic medicine department at Dhaka Medical College, said, "We saw injury marks all over Abrar's body."

"Heavy bruises were found on his hand, legs and back," he said, adding that it seemed the victim was beaten with objects like sticks or cricket stumps. The student died of internal bleeding and excessive pain, he said.

Abrar's relatives and fellow students thronged the DMC morgue.

Talking to reporters there, Abrar's aunt Shahara Banu sobbed, "Parents sacrifice a lot to raise a child and get him or her admitted to an institution like Buet. A life cannot be lost this way. I am lost for words."

"The only thing I want now is the highest punishment to the killers."

Abrar's father Barkat Ullah entered the Buet campus in tears around 4:45pm. He went to the provost's room and stayed there for more than an hour. He also went to the room where his son was tortured.

"I want justice," he said and broke down in tears.

### DEMO

As the news of Abrar's death spread, protests spread fast on campuses of

Buet, Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Jagannath University and Rajshahi University.

They said they will continue protest today and will announce further demands and ultimatums.

On Dhaka University campus, students led by Ducsu Vice President Nurul Haque Nur held banners and chanted slogans on the foot of Raju Sculpture demanding justice for Abrar.

At Rajshahi University, students staged an hour-long demonstration in front of the university's main gate, blocking Dhaka-Rajshahi highway from 1:30pm.

At Jahangirnagar University, students formed a human chain and staged demonstration protesting the killing.

Throughout the day, Buet students demonstrated for footage of the CCTVs installed at the Sher-e-Bangla Hall.

To calm them down, police officials and hall authorities said that the footage would be shown soon.

In the evening, police, however, refused to show the footage to protesters citing the ongoing investigation. This angered the protesters who tried to confine some DMP officials.

Additional policemen were called in but they could not enter the campus. The police officials finally managed to leave after the full footage was handed over to the students.

Later in the day, the protesters brought out a procession slamming the university authorities for their role.

At that time, they voiced several demands which included expulsion of the killers, their highest punishment and steps for protecting people with "different opinions". They also demanded that killers be tried at the speedy trial tribunal.

Abrar's first namaz-e-janaza was held at Buet Central Mosque around 10:00pm. Later, an ambulance carrying the body left for Kushtia for burial.

## Narco, arms cases filed against Samrat

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Sunday.

In the cases, the complainant said Samrat, known as "Casino Samrat", used to control the illegal casino business at 10 clubs in Motijheel, Arambagh, Fakirerpool and Paltan areas. He used his sway as the president of Dhaka South Jubo League to carry out his misdeeds.

Samrat used to visit Singapore once a month to gamble. Rab got the information through investigation and his interrogation, said the complainant.

According to the case statements, Samrat's key accomplices are Dhaka South City Corporation ward Councillor Mominul Haque Sayeed and former Jubo League Dhaka South organising secretary Khaled Mahmud Bhuiyan, who was arrested earlier.

The Rab raided Samrat's office in the capital's Kakrail on Sunday and seized two devices used for torturing people, a pistol with five bullets, a magazine, two kangaroo hides, 1,160 yaba tablets and 19 bottles of foreign liquor from there.

Later, a Rab mobile court sentenced

Samrat to six months in jail for possessing wild animal hides and another six months for possessing liquor.

Another mobile court also sentenced Arman to six months in jail for possessing liquor.

Samrat was sent to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj and Arman to Cumilla Central Jail on Sunday night.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission has begun an enquiry into Samrat's wealth.

It will also probe the wealth of Arman, Khalid and others whose names have come up in the media for their alleged involvement in the casino business, an ACC source said yesterday.

The source added that the commission would enquire into the wealth of top government-listed contractor GK Shamim and the Public Works Department officials whose links with him have been found.

Talking to reporters at ACC's Segunbagicha headquarters yesterday, its Chairman Iqbal Mahmood said the commission was investigating the wealth of at least 15 people whose names have come up in the media

for their alleged involvement in the casino business.

"We have collected information on 15 to 20 persons from intelligence sources and the media. We are now enquiring into their wealth," he said.

"Casino business is not an offence under the ACC act. But amassing wealth beyond known sources of income is an offence," he said, adding that is why the

ACC was probing the wealth of the persons who have apparently amassed wealth from the casino business and concealed it in their wealth statements.

### ARREST OF GOVT EMPLOYEE

There has been a debate over whether the anti-graft body would be able to conduct its drive against government employees involved in corruption as the Sarkari Chakori Ain-2018 came into effect from October 1 this year.

The law says public servants cannot be arrested until a court frames charges against them. No prior permission is needed in that case.

But before charges are framed, they can be arrested only after getting permission from the appropriate authorities, meaning the hiring authorities or any other authorities

defined in any other existing law.

An ACC team yesterday caught Assistant District Primary Education Officer of Thakurgaon Anisur Rahman and Office Assistant Julfikar red-handed taking bribes of Tk 50,000.

Asked, the ACC boss said the act has made it clear that permission will be required to arrest employees when they are discharging their duties. "Is taking bribes a duty?" he asked.

"The commission has high respect for the law. We firmly believe that the act of taking bribes is not a government job.

"The way the government has taken a zero tolerance policy against bribery and graft, the commission is implementing it the same way. There is no scope for misunderstandings," said Iqbal.

Under the new law, a civil servant will be suspended initially and will lose their jobs if they are given capital punishment or punishment of more than one year in jail.

However, they will face departmental action if they are given a jail sentence below one year.

## 2011: a room of horror and dread

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of Biomedical engineering Iftae Mosharrif Shakal, and Prattay Mubin. Pratty's political affiliations are not known yet.

Students wishing not to be named said the room was a meeting place for Awami League and BCL men.

They said it was used to host parties almost every night, which were followed by drunken students shouting and screaming. While its presence had become a nuisance, no one dared to say anything.

"The room was treated as a political room of Chhatra League. Students were picked up from the campus and tortured here," a Chhatra League leader wishing anonymity told The

Daily Star.

An assistant provost of a Buet hall wishing not to be named said BCL had rooms -- known to be torture cells -- in all the halls of the university.

"It was not in the university culture for a long time but has returned in the last five years. A specific room in each hall is used by the Chhatra League men. It is their domain and no one else is allowed there," he said.

The assistant provost also said outsiders and ex-students had been staying in different halls using their political affiliations.

Khondoker Jamius Sani, president of Buet Chhatra League, however denied the claims and said there were

no such torture cells.

Asked whether there should be any stumps, alcohol and knives in the room of a student, he said, "It should not. If anyone is found guilty, the party will take action. We also want exemplary punishment of the culprits."

Buet students have often voiced their concerns on social media and said BCL men often harass and beat students, but no action was taken.

Last year during the road safety movement, BCL men branded another student Daiyan Nafis Prodhan as Shibir, beat him up and handed him over to police.