

Dipu Moni slams

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remarks while speaking at the launching ceremony of Global Education Monitoring Report 2019 at International Mother Language Institute in the capital's Segunbagicha.

"Whether a VC would be in the chair or not is another matter altogether. But how did they [Buet teachers] allow to continue such illegal activities on the campus?" the minister said.

Asked about the general students' allegation that teachers cannot take action as the "torture cells" are run by Chhatra League men, Dipu Moni said it was not possible.

"As far as I know, such activities [ragging and torture cell] have been going on there even before the

existence of Chhatra League," the minister said.

Asked about another demand of banning student politics in Buet, she said the prime minister had already made it clear on Wednesday.

"Ragging and bullying are common in all over the world, but these do not go with the social values and education system of Bangladesh," the minister also said.

"We all will have to launch a social movement against it," she added.

Abrar, a second-year student of electrical and electronic engineering at Buet, was beaten to death by some Chhatra League men in the university's Sher-e-Bangla hall on Monday, sparking countrywide outrage.

Leave halls in 15 days

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allowed to stay in the halls without the authority's permission, reads a press release of the university.

"Punitive measures will be taken if anyone breaches the rules," the press release said.

It also said that a committee of experts from DU and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) has been formed to assess the feasibility of using bunk beds in rooms for multiple students, in case of an accommodation crisis.

The authorities also urged the students and all concerned to inform the provosts of halls and the university proctor if they found the presence of any goons, drug users, dealers and addicts on the campus or at the dormitories, it added.

The committee also said the opening hours of the central library

and departmental seminar libraries would be extended beyond 9:00pm for studying, if needed.

According to the press release, the authorities also condemned Buet student Abrar Fahad's killing, which took place inside the Sher-e-Bangla hall by Buet's BCL men earlier this week.

Demanding exemplary punishment of the killers, the committee offered condolences to Abrar's bereaved family.

Meanwhile, Jagannath University (JnU) authorities have imposed a restriction on visitors during academic hours on the campus, said a university press release issued on Wednesday.

According to it, visitors, including those who are not current students and those who have no official purpose there, have been requested not to enter the campus during class times from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

Teachers, students

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"It is a matter of shame that not only the VC, but also her family members are involved in corruption," said the associate professor.

"Nobody can remain at the post of a VC after their involvement in such crimes."

Rayhan also said that the platform had submitted a written complaint to the chancellor, but received no reply.

Economics professor Anu Muhammad pointed out that they have been protesting against corruption for weeks.

The government and the University Grants Commission are supposed to look into such allegations since the university operates with taxpayers' money, he added.

"When an institution lacks transparency and accountability, corruption holds sway," he said.

If the government wants to establish its dominance on campuses, then it will pick those who will patronise corruption, hooliganism and irregularities as the VCs.

"It depends on whether the government wants the institutions to operate as proper universities or wants hooligans and musclemen to run them," Anu Muhammad said.

He also stressed the need for creating a democratic environment on campus.

Ariful Islam, joint convenor of JU Chhatra Adhikar Parishad, said the evidence of corruption against the VC was clear. If the government needs more proof, it should investigate.

The VC could not be reached for comments yesterday.

Huge saltwater croc kills fisherman in Philippine

AFP, Manila

A huge saltwater crocodile killed a Philippines fisherman after snatching him from his boat, local authorities said yesterday, the latest in a series of attacks terrorising a remote southern island.

The 20-year-old was taken by a 4.9-metre (16-foot) croc late Tuesday as he and a colleague sailed back to the island of Balabac after a day of fishing, regional police spokesman Socrates Faltado told AFP.

Risha's killer

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love.

Before committing the offence, he bought a knife from Hatirpool Bazar and he used it to stab the victim.

Three people, including a student of the same school, saw Obaidul stabbing Risha and fleeing the scene. They tried to catch him but could not, says the judgment.

Risha lost her battle for life at the ICU of Dhaka Medical College Hospital four days after she was attacked.

Her mother Tania Hossain filed a case against Obaidul with Ramna Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

The death of Risha, eldest child of Ramzan Hossain and Tania Hossain, sparked protests across the capital. Students of the institution held rallies blocking the road and demanded



Obaidul Khan

exemplary punishment of the killer.

Obaidul was arrested in Nilphamari with the help of locals a week after the incident. Obaidul, of Dinajpur's Miradangi village, used to work at a tailor's shop on Elephant Road.

On September 5, 2016, he gave his confessional statement before a magistrate. He said he stabbed the girl with an intention to kill her. As she refused his love, he planned to kill her.

On November 14 that year, Ali Hossain, inspector of Ramna Police Station, submitted the charge sheet against Obaidul.

The court framed the charge against the accused on April 17, 2017.

Additional Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal appeared for the state while Faruque Ahmed defended the accused.

Fathers of 2 suspects

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said Anik was the most ruthless of the attackers while Robein was the one who started hitting Abrar Fahad, a Buet student who was beaten to death at his dormitory early Monday.

Anik of Mohonpur upazila was the information and research affairs secretary and Robein of Paba upazila was the organising secretary of Buet BCL.

Anik is one of the two sons of Anwar Hossain Sarker, an apparel businessman.

He broke down in tears while talking to this correspondent yesterday and said his dreams about his son came crashing down when he heard about his son's involvement in the killing.

"I thought he would be an asset of the country after completing his education... I am well-off and always met his demands. He was the brightest student in our area. Why did he feel the need to take someone's life?"

Anwar often advised his son against engaging in politics since he went to Dhaka to study in Notre Dame

College and then Buet.

"I want to know how my son got engaged in politics and why he killed someone. I want the government to investigate that and root out the problems."

He then added that his son must face the trial for what he had done.

Anik's mother has not stopped crying since learning about Anik's involvement with the murder, he said. "It feels like my backbone has been broken."

Another accused Robein is the only child of Maksud Ali, a teacher of Bharuapara High School. He said he had been waiting for Robein's graduation next year.

Maksud, also a joint secretary of ward unit Awami League, said, "As he got involved [in the crime], he must face the trial."

He too demanded an investigation into how his son got involved in the killing.

"There is no end to my miseries now. He is my only child. I don't want any other fathers to go through this."



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receives a crest from Dhaka Wasa MD Tqsem A Khan during a programme at a city hotel yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Buet protesters won't budge

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saying that the Buet authorities could ban student politics if it wanted.

The demonstrators were scheduled to have a meeting with the VC yesterday evening but it was postponed.

Meanwhile, police arrested three more suspects taking the tally to 16.

Key suspect Ifthi Mosharrif Shakal yesterday confessed to beating up Abrar with other Chhatra League leaders.

The home and law ministers yesterday said that the trial would start soon and be fast paced.

The Buet teachers' association, meanwhile, reiterated its demand for the VC's removal.

Central Chhatra League and their other units, including Dhaka University unit, brought out a mourning procession from TSC yesterday and marched towards the Central Shaheed Minar.

They also demanded capital punishment for Abrar's killers.

"We sincerely urge the government to ensure capital punishment of the killers," BCL acting president Al Nahean Khan Joy said after a rally.

SHAKAL CONFESSES
Biomedical engineering department's 16th batch student Shakal, key accused in the Abrar murder case, yesterday confessed that he along with other BCL men tortured Abrar leading to his death.

Metropolitan Magistrate Sdbir Yasir Ahsan Chowdhury recorded his statement after Detective Branch of Police Inspector Md Wahiduzzaman, investigation officer of the case,

produced him before the magistrate.

Shakal, social welfare secretary of Buet BCL unit, was sent to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj afterwards.

Police officials said Shakal hails from Rajbari and is accused No-5 in the case. His father is a local private tutor.

THREE MORE ARRESTED
Yesterday, detectives arrested three Buet students, including Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Amit Saha, Abrar's roommate Mizanur Rahman Mizan, and Hossain Mohammad Toha in connection with the murder.

Amit was arrested at Dhaka's Sabujbagh around 11:00am, Mizan at Buet campus around 12:30pm, and Toha at Mawna of Gazipur around 3:00pm.

Before Abrar was called out of his room allegedly by BCL men, Amit reportedly enquired about his whereabouts via text messages with other students, said police sources.

Amit, a student of 16th batch of Buet's civil engineering department, is the deputy law secretary of Buet BCL unit. Abrar was tortured in Amit's Sher-e-Bangla Hall room (room-2011).

DMP Additional Commissioner Monirul Islam at the DMP media centre yesterday said Amit was arrested following information gleaned from other arrestees.

So far, police arrested 16 suspects including four who were not named in the first information report.

"Arrest of so many suspects in quick succession was possible due to the sincerity of police," Monirul said,

adding that 10 were arrested even before the case was filed.

He said many of the accused were willing to confess and police were scrutinising their statements.

Asked why police did not contact the Hall administration knowing there was an injured person inside, Monirul said, "Police had no information about anyone ill or grievously injured."

'REMOVE VC'
The Buet Teachers' Association yesterday reiterated its demand for the removal of the university's Vice-Chancellor Prof Saiful Islam for his "failure to ensure safety of students on campus".

It urged the government to force the VC to resign if he did not do so willingly.

Association President Prof AKM Masum said, "The VC's continuous careless attitude towards students' torture and his failure to ensure their safety encouraged the killers to murder Abrar."

He was talking to reporters in front of the Central Shaheed Minar after placing their seven-point demand, which included a ban on party-based politics on Buet campus.

Speaking to journalists on Wednesday, the association had voiced the same demands.

The VC could not be reached for comments yesterday.

'CHARGE SHEET SOON'
Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said the charge sheet in Abrar murder case would be pressed soon, reports UNB.

"The law enforcement agencies are working on it and a flawless charge sheet will be pressed," he said while talking to reporters at the secretariat.

Referring to the PM's directives on drives at university dormitories, the minister said, "We'll talk to the vice-chancellors and conduct search operations at halls of universities and colleges soon."

Replying to a query on "torture cells" at dormitories, he said, "We'll look into it."

'SPEEDY DISPOSAL OF CASE'
Assuring that steps would be taken to dispose of Abrar murder case fast, Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said those involved in the gruesome killing, irrespective of their identity, would be brought to book.

"The trial will be completed and justice will be served," he said while speaking at an inauguration programme for a building of the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Noakhali.

The minister said the government has taken measures for completing the investigation fast.

NHRC MONITORING
The National Human Rights Commission yesterday sought speedy trial of Abrar murder and demanded exemplary punishment of the killers.

"We deeply condemn the barbaric murder of Abrar Fahad and we have been closely observing the government's actions taken in this regard," a NHRC press release quoted its chief Nasima Begum as saying.

The commission members also observed a minute of silence in remembrance of Abrar.

It's culture of impunity that killed Abrar

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Activists of the ruling party's student wing would then abuse, torture and even kill their rivals without ever having to face trial or sentence.

From 1991 to 2006, we saw power alternating between the BNP and the AL with the control of the university dormitories alternating between their student wings. Since Awami League has been ruling for the last 10 years and has retained power for a third term, its student front's control over public universities has become "quasi-permanent" with the concomitant changes in their behaviour, lifestyle and attitude towards fellow students.

Most of the top Chhatra League leaders own flats, cars and businesses with signs of opulence literally oozing out from their every move including dishing out favours and cash to their sycophants. As and when they visit the campus, riders on motorbikes clear the road in advance so their leaders' journey is not hindered by the commoners.

According to Buet students, Chhatra League leaders would regularly beat up or "punish" students for not showing due "respect" to them by standing up when they passed or greeting them with proper salutation.

Beatings were inevitable if any student -- especially the newly admitted ones -- did not join any Chhatra League rally or event. One or two slaps was the "kindest" of treatment. They ran a virtual fiefdom right in front of the university administration and the latter did not have the courage to impose the minimum of institutional discipline.

And then the VC has the gall to say "why should I resign? I have done nothing wrong". He has failed to provide the basic security to his students and protect them, as is now revealed, from regular abuse and even death. Obviously, this learned teacher has not heard of "moral responsibility" or "ethical role" of any head of an educational institution.

If we care to read, there is so much "written" in Abrar's murder -- the sheer cruelty, the depth of depravity, the gruesomeness of the act, the extent of lawlessness, the sense of being above the law, the world of criminality in which the perpetrators lived and

the sense that they held the key to life and death of anybody they laid their eyes on.

The cruelty of the act was mindboggling to say the least. I read and reread the autopsy report which said the "death was caused by internal bleeding and excessive pain." It was the last two words, "excessive pain", that have been haunting me from the moment I read them. I pictured Abrar screaming in absolute pain. Did nobody hear him? Inside the university? Impossible. It appears that some did at the beginning and was dissuaded from entering the room. After that Abrar was gagged so that his screams were muffled and nearly inaudible. Even then many must have heard but nobody dared to intervene fearing a similar fate for themselves. Such was the killers' writ spread over the most prestigious educational institution in the country.

We can picture in our mind's eye Abrar pleading with his tormentors to stop the incessant beating and give him a moment to breathe. When he could not bear the pain any longer, he must have begged for mercy and for his life. But all his cries, pleading and begging went in vain. And in response, his killers commented "... he is pretending. We can beat him for another two hours."

Police Sub-Inspector Delwar Hossain visited the hall but was kept waiting for 45 minutes and not allowed to come to Abrar's aid which could have saved his life.

Delwar spoke to his boss who also did not instruct him to force his way into the room where Abrar's killing was taking place. Would the police have listened to anyone else but the BCL general secretary? This illustrates how "law takes its own course" and speaks of the power of the killers and the powerlessness of police. It could happen only because police knew well that to move against Chhatra League needed clearance.

According to police, 23-24 Buet students took part in the brutal killing of Abrar. It is quite unbelievable that all of them were so steeped in depravity and so utterly devoid of basic human feelings that they could have continued beating Abrar for four to six hours without a single breath of

mercy.

Of them, Anik Sarkar is said to have struck Abrar 200 times with a cricket stump till it broke. For these Chhatra Leaguers beating Abrar mercilessly seemed like a "festivity" of which they all had to have a share. As the beating continued, some went out for a while and returned to resume. It is relevant to remember that the bleeding was not in the brain in which case death would have occurred sooner. The bleeding was internal, which took time to make the vital organs fail.

Two sets of questions must immediately be addressed -- one dealing with the wider social and political atmosphere and the other internal to the universities themselves.

We must ask what has happened to our glorious tradition of student movements that lay at the heart of all our democratic struggles? We knew that military dictatorship perverted our students, but why should such aberration occur under civilian rule?

What sort of political environment turns high-performing students into butchers? How long are we going to allow the "culture of impunity" to destroy the fundamental institutions of governance? How long will we allow our basic social and human values to be torn to shreds?

Internal to the universities, the questions we must ask is what sort of educational institutions have we created that bring out the worst in our young instead of the best? What education can these institutions provide when basic humanity is lost?

What has happened to the conscience of our teachers who do nothing and do not have the minimum guts to raise their voice even after seeing such brutalities and perversities every day? What can be expected from such givers of "knowledge, wisdom and ethics" when all they can think of is their jobs, promotions, foreign scholarships and possible lucrative consultancies? (The burden of collective shame must haunt all teachers). What can we expect from university administrations that are not willing to guarantee the minimum academic atmosphere for students to study and excel?

As we had said earlier, Abrar's life was taken away by a few "demons"

masquerading as students, but he was actually killed by the system -- a system of impunity, lack of accountability, corruption, abuse of power and flouting of the law.

S Korea may acquire nuclear submarines after North's test

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's Navy is considering acquiring nuclear-powered submarines, it said yesterday in a surprise announcement which would change the balance of power in north-east Asia and is likely to upset several of its neighbours.

Seoul is surrounded by three nuclear powers -- China, Russia, and North Korea, which invaded its neighbour in 1950 -- while it and neighbour Japan, both of them US allies but with difficult relations between them, rely on Washington's nuclear umbrella.

Pyongyang last week tested what it said was a submarine-launched ballistic missile, although the US said it seemed to have been fired from a "sea-based platform".

A proven submarine-based missile capability would take the North's arsenal to a new level, allowing deployment far beyond the Korean peninsula and a second-strike capability in the event of an attack on its military bases.

In a report submitted to parliament the South Korean Navy said it had set up a task force headed by a commander-level official to examine procuring nuclear-powered submarines in the long term, the South's Yonhap news agency reported.

It appears to be the first time Seoul has publicly spoken of developing nuclear submarines, which were not mentioned in its most recent defence white paper. The document, released in January, said the South had 10 conventional diesel-powered submarines, compared to 70 for the North.

According to South Korean media, the navy said the issue was "a matter to be determined as a national policy in consultation with the Defence Ministry and the Joint Chief of Staff" -- with no mention of the US.