

Workers Party rocked as top leader quits

Bimol Biswas resigns over 'undemocratic approach' in running the left-leaning party

RASHIDUL HASAN

Workers Party suffered a blow as its former general secretary and current politburo member Bimol Biswas resigned from the left-leaning organisation, alleging that it was being run in an undemocratic manner.

In a letter to key party leaders, including its President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Fazle Hossain Badsha, Bimol also expressed his determination to foster unity among communists and other left-leaning forces on the basis of the labour class struggle.

He also stated five reasons for leaving the party, including the party's high-ups being involved in activities which go against Marxist-Leninist ideologies, though they used to speak in favour of it.

Bimol also said the top leaders of the Workers Party's top were undermining party policy in the name of having a strategic unity with the ruling Awami League.

"The strategic unity with Awami League was used to become MPs and ministers," he said in the letter.

ACCOUNTS OF AL LAWMAKER, WIFE

NBR asks banks to give info

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has asked banks to furnish details of all types of accounts and savings instruments of Awami League lawmaker Nazrul Islam Babu, his wife and his business firms to examine their tax compliance.

The business entities owned by Nazrul, a former Chhatra League leader, are Suchana Dyeing and Printing Ltd, M/S Star Trading Co, M/S Babu Enterprise, and M/S Suchana Dying Printing Weaving Industries.

The tax administration's directive comes at a time when the government is carrying out drives against

the left-leaning leader alleged that people irrespective of their ideology and identity were included in the party in different parts of the country in the name of increasing party membership and to show an increase in the party's strength.

"You know it very well that the ideological and organisational differences between me and the party will not be removed. I am withdrawing myself from the post of the party's primary member. It is my democratic right," he wrote.

Earlier in 2017 and April of this year, Bimol wanted to quit the party saying that it was impossible for him to remain involved in it.

In 2018, a group of Workers Party leaders led by Haider Akbar Khan Rono left the organisation in protest of the party President Rashed Khan Menon's decision to contest the election with the AL's electoral symbol instead of the party's own one.

Another group of leaders, led by Rabib Ashan Munna, Tusher Roy and Mojammel Haque Tara, also left the party after it took part in the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



Ignoring a road sign, rickshaws and motorcycles take the wrong side of a street near the Bangabhaban in the capital yesterday. Although Dhaka Metropolitan Police has taken different steps to bring discipline on road, there has hardly been any change. Road rules violations are still rampant. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Stalemate in cricket

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh are scheduled to tour India later this month to play a three-match T20I series followed by two Tests. The series will start with the first T20I on November 3.

Bangladesh will play the second Test at Kolkata, starting on November 22. Newly-elected Indian cricket board president Sourav Ganguly has also invited Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to watch that game.

"We all know who the outsiders are but we will have to find out who is working against Bangladesh cricket from within the team," the BCB president said without elaborating.

Although the BCB president said that most of the demands made by the cricketers could have been solved through discussion, he was more critical of the manner in which it was made public without the slightest prior knowledge of the board.

He said that the boycott was a bolt from the blue and had tarnished the image of the country's cricket. While turning his focus to a conspiracy theory for most part of the animated briefing, he also sought a few more days to unmask the conspirators.

"You all know there is a conspiracy to destabilise Bangladesh cricket. There have been efforts made to the ICC to suspend Bangladesh like Zimbabwe," he said without disclosing any names.

But he also did not offer any constructive solution to the stalemate during his nearly half-hour-long deliberations on the pressing issue.

"If they [the players] don't want to come, they won't. I don't understand

what benefit they will get from not playing," he said bitterly, adding that he could not believe they would stop playing just because of money.

The BCB boss also said that he believed most of the cricketers did not know about the 'conspiracy', but thought that maybe one or two did.

"We all know who the outsiders are but we will have to find out who is working against Bangladesh cricket from within the team," the BCB president said without elaborating.

When asked whether the board would take any disciplinary actions against the boycotting players, he said: "You will all know when the time will come."

Although Hassan tried to touch upon the 11-point demands, he was not convincing when asked why the board was yet to remove the player-by-choice system in the Dhaka Premier League, which accommodates most of the domestic cricketers.

"I have told [Kazi] Inam [Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis chairman] to do that [revert to players' draft system]", he said, adding that he gave the instruction seven days ago.

But when asked how it was still in force when he made a commitment that the player-by-choice system would only be applicable for one year when it was imposed in 2013, Hassan said he also had to comply with requests from clubs.

The other salient points the players made were: adjusting the salaries of the locals players in line with the foreign players in the Bangladesh Premier League, increasing match fees, salaries and other facilities in the first-class circuit, appointment of a coach and physio round-the-year, improved practice facilities in every division, allotment of quality balls and increasing the number of contracted players and salary in the national team.

"We have complied with, or are working on implementing most of the demands. We are open if they come and talk to us," Hassan said. "They knew that if they came to us with the demands, we would have agreed, but they then would have to play. I think it is part of the conspiracy."

The players also demanded that the leadership of the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) step down. Bangladesh's first Test captain Naimur Rahman is the president of CWAB, a legitimate body for cricketers which is supposed to bargain on behalf of the players with the BCB.

Although it reflected the no-confidence of the current players in CWAB, Naimur said yesterday: "We have not come here to stick to the post, we also want new leadership to take over but there is a process and it has to be followed."

BHOLA VIOLENCE Muslim couple saves Hindu neighbours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At a time when the southern district of Bhola was trembling with fear after a bloody clash between police and religious zealots, a Muslim couple came forward to protect their Hindu neighbours from an attack carried out by a swarm of fanatics, putting their own lives at stake.

Md Helal and his wife Farzana Ferdousi came out of their house on Sunday when about a hundred of religious bigots stormed into Bhawali Bari area of Borhanuddin municipality to carry out an attack on the lives and properties of the Hindu community living there.

A section of the crowd gathered at the Eidgah Maidan under the banner of "Sarbaster Muslim Tawhid Janata" rushed to the area following a clash with police over a hate conversation spread through Facebook and its messenger.

Though the couple could not protect all their neighbours in the face of such a huge number of attackers, they at least showed the courage to stand against all odds when no one came forward.

The zealots torched a house and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Venezuela's Guaido holds 'exploratory' talks with China, Russia: envoy

APP, Sao Paulo

Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaido has asked China and Russia to help end a political crisis crippling the Latin American country during "exploratory" talks, his diplomatic representative in Brazil said Monday.

Oil-rich Venezuela's economy is crumbling amid a political standoff between leftist President Nicolas Maduro and Guaido, the national assembly speaker widely recognized as the country's legitimate leader.

Teresa Belandria, whom Guaido appointed as Venezuela's envoy to Brazil earlier this year after declaring himself acting president, said the opposition leader has met with various Chinese delegations in the capital Caracas.

Members of his coalition also have had contact with Russia, including in the Brazilian capital Brasilia.

Moscow and Beijing are staunch supporters of Maduro's government.

"These are exploratory contacts in which they have asked (Russia and China) to be part of the solution to the crisis and to become facilitators of the democratic transition process," Belandria told Brazilian and Venezuelan investors in Sao Paulo as she presented the opposition's economic plan in the event of a political transition.

Man beaten to death

FROM PAGE 1 and asked them to send their son to collect those from his home, he said.

When Ejahar, along with his wife and parents, went to Raihan's home, Raihan tied his hands and legs together with ropes and beat him up mercilessly, Sabbir alleged.

Contacted, Noor-E-Alam Mina, superintendent of Chattogram district police, told The Daily Star that they arrested the SI and his brother-in-law following the allegation of beating a man to death.

"We found the allegation to be true and the SI will be shown arrested in a case, which will be filed after getting the autopsy report," he said.

Instigators still on the loose

FROM PAGE 1 the administration and police's failure in previous incidents.

This time 25-year-old Biplob Chandra Baidya is in the spotlight.

A screenshot of anti-religious messages that he allegedly sent through Facebook messenger was circulated, and it touched off fierce reactions across Borhanuddin upazila.

Police took Biplob in custody and promptly arrested two others for hacking his Facebook account. However, that did little to tame the religious bigots who attacked police and local administration officials.

The fire opened in retaliation, as police put it in a statement, caused deaths of four and injured over 100 others.

The wait is now on to see if police finally identify those who wrote and sent the messages, who took the screenshot and circulated it, and who the attackers were.

The previous incidents, however, do not offer much to hope for.

"MAIN CULPRITS NOT CHARGE-SHEETED"

In 2012, Uttam's Facebook profile picture was doctored to make an anti-religious post, which spread like wildfire before mobs took to the streets.

Nineteen Buddhist temples and more than a hundred homes of the minority community in Ramu, Ulchia, Teknaf and Cox's Bazar Sadar upazilas and Chattogram's Patia were torched and razed to the ground.

As many as 18 cases are now at the trial stage, including the one filed against Uttam under the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act.

Most of the cases were either under the ICT Act or in connection with the violence. The police had submitted seven charge sheets to a court in Cox's Bazar, accusing 385 people in the cases filed with the Ramu Police Station.

Prime accused Tofail Ahmed, chairman of Bandarban's Naikhyangchhari upazila, was detained in January 2016 in an arson attack case. He is now on bail.

Locals and witnesses, however, say that the main attackers have not been

charge-sheeted and many of the cases filed over the violence are yet to see any progress.

Tarun Barua, a Buddhist community leader and vice president of Ramu Sima Mahabir managing committee, claimed the main culprits who played major roles in the attacks on Buddhists were not named in the charge sheets.

"Police were careless in preparing the charge sheets in all the cases," he added.

Uttam fled on the night of the attacks. Police could not find him but submitted a charge sheet in December 2014 accusing him of posting the image on the social media.

2016 INVESTIGATION INCOMPLETE

Four years after the Ramu attacks, fisherman Rasharaj Das found himself in a similar situation on his way back home after work.

Speaking to The Daily Star later, he said he had no idea as to how and why a violent mob had turned against him.

An image demeaning the holy mosques of the Muslims was posted on Facebook from Rasharaj's profile.

Enraged, people attacked Rasharaj and vandalised his house, in Harinber village of Nasirnagar upazila, before police took him into custody.

According to a research by the Centre for Advanced Research in Arts and Social Sciences of Dhaka University, a local computer operator had created the Facebook profile for Rasharaj.

The operator was a college student and the younger brother of Jahangir Alam, owner of a cyber-café, who was made an accused in the case initially filed against Rasharaj.

Police arrested more than 100 locals, including Union Parishad Chairman Atikur Rahman Akhi and Jahangir, followers of lawmaker RAM Obaidul Muktadir Chowdhury. Both of them are now out on bail.

They were suspected of creating communal tension in the area.

In a letter to Brahmanbaria's Chief Judicial Magistrate, police spoke of finding evidence that Jahangir had saved the image in a computer in his cyber-café and posted it on Rasharaj's

Facebook profile on October 27, 2016.

It was done to create communal tension in the area, read the letter.

A forensic exam did not find the image in Rasharaj's mobile phone or the memory card attached to it. Police on October 10 failed to submit an investigation report in the case against Rasharaj.

Research Fellow Towhidul Islam Nitol said the reason the masterminds are yet to be brought to book is that the ruling party doesn't want to expose its members as among those responsible for attacks on religious minorities.

Nitol, who is going to present his research paper on religious tolerance in the South Asian Fraternity annual conference next month in Kerala, India, also said that every time religious extremist groups had active roles in creating a violent environment, other political parties took advantage of the situation in their own interests.

The Sanju Barman case filed in October last year had similar backdrop.

A post hurting religious sentiments of the Muslims was made from his Facebook profile.

Nasir Mia, from Ekattor Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, who is representing Sanju in court said his client was innocent and was "incapable of committing the crime he was accused of".

Nitol said that police could not unearth what had actually happened in any of the instances and so the easiest thing to do was implicate the minority targets like Uttam, Rasharaj.

He further said the government's current position is not enough to maintain religious harmony and protect minorities, adding that it should give priority to bringing the instigators to book if such attacks are to be prevented in the future.

The cases filed in connection with similar incidents in Pabna in November 2013 and again in Rangpur in November 2017 also saw little to no progress.

(Our Cox's Bazar correspondent contributed to this report.)