

Use insurance industry for welfare: PM

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the insurance companies to utilise the industry for humanitarian welfare and said a Unified Messaging Platform (UMP) would be introduced to protect the customers from insurance frauds.

"I hope you [insurance companies] will use the insurance industry for humanitarian welfare and play a more effective role in keeping production and economy out of risk," she said.

The PM came up with the remarks while addressing as the chief guest of 15th International Conference on Inclusive Insurance at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel.

Bangladesh Insurance Association has arranged the three-day conference in association with Munich Re Foundation and Microinsurance Network with the theme "Coping With Climate Risk".

Hasina described inadequacy of information as a major problem for insurance customers.

Putting emphasis on introduction of micro insurance schemes to tackle climate change risk, she said it will greatly benefit lower income group people affected due to natural calamities.

The PM said a directive has been issued to bring transparency in transactions in the insurance industry. "All transactions above Tk 10



thousand must be performed through a bank. All insurance companies have been instructed to show their updated insurance claims on their own website," she said.

Hasina said being the largest Delta in the world, Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable

nations to climate change.

"Insurance can play an effective role in tackling the natural disasters. But application of insurance is very limited and inadequate in covering the risks resulting from natural disaster," she said.

An insurance policy for the workers working abroad has been introduced, the PM said.

Pointing out that the settlement of insurance claim has been a problem for the insurance industry, Hasina said initiatives have been taken to resolve the issue and safeguard the interests of consumers.

She also said initiatives have been taken to insure building insurance to ensure the financial security of the risks arising from the fire in the buildings.

"The deadline is set by December 2019 to enlist 27 insurance companies that are not yet listed in the capital market," she said.

The "Bangabandhu Education Insurance" is underway so that school-going students can continue their education in absence of their parents.



Demonstrators chant slogans during a procession on Jahangirnagar University campus in Savar yesterday, demanding resignation of the vice chancellor. Bottom, protesters take care of Prof Sayeed Ferdous after he fell on the ground during the demonstration. Students leave the campus after the university was closed indefinitely.

PHOTO: STAR/ COLLECTED



39 lakh leaders

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League President Sheikh Hasina, also organisational chief of Krishak League, is scheduled to inaugurate the council.

Leaders of the organisation said they would place a proposal to expand their central committee members to 155 from the existing 111 and all its other committees.

"We want to increase the number of office bearers of the committee as the number of the country's people, including farmers, have increased. Krishak League has also flourished in recent times," the front's President Motahar Hossain said.

Apart from the number of leaders, the organisation is also going to modify its slogan.

Krishak League Organising Secretary Asaduzzaman Bipob said, "We will propose to add the words... 'Happy Farmer, Happy Bangladesh, Bangabandhu's Bangladesh' to the current slogan 'Save farmers, and Save the Country'."

Bangladesh is an agro-based country and majority of the inhabitants are directly or indirectly involved in agricultural activities for their livelihood.

NOT FOR FARMERS

According to various media reports, it was seen that Krishak League leaders could hardly be seen working to ensure rights of farmers.

In recent years, they were not seen beside the farmers who did not get fair paddy price.

Krishak League have also not raised their voice regarding farmers' problems centring loss of agricultural land, when distribution of seed and fertilizer is not taking properly or when farmers are becoming landless.

The organisation's rank and file are sitting on the council session amid huge criticism that they remain busy making "their fortune".

Insiders said usually, the leaders who do not get posts in the Awami League, become leaders of front organisations like Krishak League. Many of them are involved in irregularities, lobbying, tender manipulation and establishing local influence.

The organisation leaders also try to get hold of tender-related to agriculture ministry and others agriculture-related offices.

When asked, its president dismissed the allegations and said they were dedicated to working for establishing the rights of farmers.

He said they worked in favour of farmers when the latter took to the streets to demand fair price, adding, "But we did not get media coverage."

"No one from Krishak League is involved in the casino business, lobbying or tender-grabbing," he said, when it was pointed out that Krishak League central committee member Shafiqul Alam Feroz is now in jail for his alleged involvement in the illegal casino business.

Feroz was also president of Kalabagan Kirira Chakra Club.

WHERE ARE THE FARMER LEADERS

In 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman formed the organisation with the slogan "Save farmers, Save the country" in a bid to protect farmers' interests and to work for their betterment.

But farmers hardly find representation in the central committee of the organisation meant for them.

Krishak League leaders confirmed to this newspaper that at least 35 of the central leaders are lawyers and, of them, most are supporters of Krishak League General Secretary Shamsul Haque Reza, who is a Supreme Court lawyer.

The front's President Motahar is a contractor and former chairman of Kapasia upazilla. He owns an agriculture farm.

Dhaka North unit President Maksudul Rahman and General Secretary Abdul Halim, Dhaka South unit President Momtaj Ahmed and General Secretary Abdul Rob Khan are businessmen.

"It is completely baseless that only farmers will lead Krishak League. Rather people who will take work for the betterment of peasants or stand beside them can be leaders of our organisation," said Motahar.

KRISHAK LEAGUE IN AMERICA?

The front's top leaders confirmed that they have committees in the USA, UK, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Malaysia and UAE, where Bangladeshi expatriates have nothing to do with agriculture or peasants.

Motahar said that many Bangladeshi farmers or their children are living abroad, so they need the organisation there.

"Our charter allows Krishak League to have organisations abroad," he added.

Besides, Krishak League has at least 6,900 leaders in their full-fledged Dhaka north and south committees, 46 thana committees and 66 ward committees in the capital, all of which hardly have any farmers. In fact, these committees are in places which do not have any significant farmland either.

AL high-ups in recent times raised questions over Krishak League's committees abroad and in several thanas in the capital like in Gulshan and Dhanmondi where there is no farmland.

The front's president, however, claimed that many farmers lived in capital and thus, committees were required.

INCUMBENT COMMITTEE

The last triannual council of Krishak League held on July 19, 2012. After it, two top leaders spent more than a year to announce a full central committee.

The incumbent committee has been doing nothing other than joining special programmes by AL. "This committee is gripped with inertia. This is a sheer failure of top leaders" said an organising secretary.

He pointed out that it had not held any "Uthan Baithak" or meetings for many years. But it was their method to raise awareness among the farmers of their rights.

US judges reject Trump appeal over tax returns

AFP, New York

A US appeals court ruled on Monday that President Donald Trump must release eight years of tax returns, dealing a blow to his attempts to keep his personal earnings private.

The decision is the latest development in a years-long effort to obtain copies of Trump's taxes, which

he promised during the campaign to make public after an audit but has since refused to share.

A three-judge panel in Manhattan rejected an appeal by the president's lawyers challenging a subpoena by New York prosecutors that demanded that his accounting firm hand over the records.

BCL men swoop on JU protesters

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Islamic Chhatra Shibir activists and thanked the BCL men for "dispersing" them.

"It's a joyous day for me... I am very grateful to students, especially to Chhatra League [members]. They took the responsibility upon themselves and did it," she said. "I have said it's a mass upsurge. But, they did not do it at my directive."

"I was confined to my house along with my other family members, including a child. We've faced verbal abuse."

After the university authorities announced the closure, many pan-stricken students, mainly the female ones, started leaving the dormitories.

The situation at the male halls, however, was different. Most of them stayed.

In the evening, a large number of female students broke out of their halls and joined the protesters, who had been dispersed in front of the VC's residence.

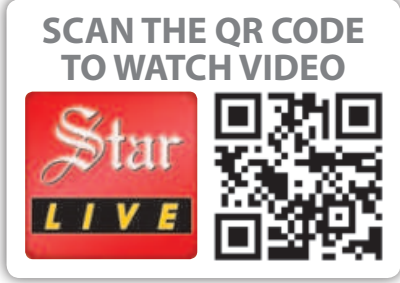
The students again gathered in front of the VC's residence and chanted slogans demanding punishment of the attackers and removal of the VC. They were there till late at night and before leaving declared to come back again this morning.

Contacted, the JU BCL chief, Jewel, too alleged that the protesters were Shibir activists. "That's why we stepped in to disperse them. We want a Shibir-free campus."

The agitators rejected the allegation and said branding protesters as Shibir men was an old strategy for thwarting peaceful demonstrations.

"Buet's Abrar [Fahad] was killed in a similar manner. Here, the attackers are using the same excuse," said philosophy department Prof Raihan Rhyne, a spokesperson for the platform staging the protest.

Prof Raihan, who was also hurt in the assault, said many of the injured were



known faces of left-leaning political organisations.

The other injured teachers included Prof Sayeed Ferdous and Prof Mirza Taslima Sultana, teachers of anthropology department; Prof Abdur Razzak of zoology department; Assistant Professor Khandakar Hasan Mahmud of geography and environment department; and Prof Shamima Sultana of Bangla department.

Talking to The Daily Star, Hasan Mahmud said, "The BCL men kicked in my abdomen."

Prof Khabir Uddin of environmental sciences department, described the assault on the teachers as a nasty incident. He said the BCL men carried out the attack with support from the VC and the teachers backed by her.

"The VC-backed teachers were clapping when we were being assaulted."

Mahathir Mohammad, a spokesperson for the agitating students, said the students did not follow the university's order to vacate halls, protesting the attack.

The university plunged into a crisis in the wake of the student protests in August demanding a judicial enquiry into the reported involvement of the vice-chancellor in corruption and mismanagement of Tk 1,445-crore campus development project.

Allegations were raised that the VC managed the JU BCL unit leaders with Tk 1 crore as "Eid Salami" for not

standing in the way of the ongoing mega project.

The two top leaders of central BCL -- the president and the general secretary -- were removed from the posts after allegation surfaced that they demanded their "share" from the financial allocation for the development work.

A JU BCL faction publicly claimed it had received Tk 25 lakh as per a settlement reached at an August 9 meeting at the VC's residence. However, there has been no investigation into the allegations yet.

The VC has always claimed she is not involved in any corruption or irregularities.

After a brief pause, the students under the banner of "Jahangirnagar Against Corruption" resumed their agitation on October 27.

As part of the protests, over 100 students took position in front of the VC's residence around 7:00pm on Monday, demanding her resignation. About 25 teachers and more students joined the demo yesterday morning.

Witnesses said VC-backed teachers and officials came to the residence around 11:00am to bring her out. Heated exchanges took place between the protesters and the teachers at that time.

The assault was carried out an hour later.

A BCL man was seen brandishing a firearm, according to a witness.

University correspondents of four media outlets -- the daily Prothom Alo, barta24.com, barta bazar and banglalive24 -- were injured while covering the incident.

Acting proctor of the university ASM Firoz UI Hasan said, "A mob appeared at the place of the protests, we were unable to bring them under control."

Tension gripped the campus last night as the demonstration seeking the VC's removal is to roll on today.

At least 28 took part in or abetted the crime

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while they were torturing him, he begged for water, but they didn't give him a single drop.

Doctors said he died of internal bleeding and excessive pain. There were injury marks all over his body, with bruises on his arms, legs and back.

A PLANNED ATTACK

Two to three days before the killing, Abrar's roommate at the dorm, Mizanur Rahman, told expelled Buet BCL organising secretary Mehedi Hasan Robein that he thought Abrar was a Shibir supporter, investigators said.

Mizanur and several other BCL men then held a meeting at the canteen on October 4 and decided that they would evict all Shibir men from the hall. Buet BCL leaders, batch-15 students Robein and batch 16 students Moniruzzaman Monir, Akash Hossain and Amit Saha, were present at the meeting.

After the meeting, Robein wrote on a Facebook Messenger group of batch-15 and -16 Buet BCL members, "Abrar will be beaten and driven out of the hall within two days if his involvement with Shibir is found." A few minutes later, Moniruzzaman and Amit wrote, "Ok Bhai".

Around 10:00pm, expelled BCL leaders Moniruzzaman, Mustaba Rafid Imam, Akash Hossain, Khandaker Tabakkarul Islam Tanvir, Ismail Hossain, Ifti Mosharrak Shokal and one other suspect met at the guest room of the hall.

But the plan to interrogate Abrar could not be executed that night

because Abrar was at his village home.

THE NIGHT OF HORROR

On October 6, batch-17 student Hossain Mohammad Toha told Ifti that Abrar had returned to the hall from his village in Kusthia.

Around 8:00pm, Ifti asked BCL men Muntasir Al Jemi, Ehteshamul Rabbi Tanim, Majedur Rahman, Mustaba Rafid and other students Toha, Shamsul Arefin Rafath, Shamim Billah, Morshed Amartya Islam, Abu Hurayra Moaz, Galib and Saiful to bring Abrar to room-2011 on the first floor.

Abrar was studying maths when they took him to room-2011 along with his two cell phones and a laptop.

Robein started quizzing Abrar and started slapping him soon afterwards.

Anik Sarkar, who was the Buet BCL information and research secretary, hit the victim over 100 times with cricket stumps in two phases. Everybody in the room was frightened, seeing the way Anik was beating him up.

Ifi and Moniruzzaman also began to strike Abrar with cricket stumps. A stump got broken in half at one stage. Meftahul Islam Zion then hit the victim with a piece of the broken stump. The stumps were brought by Morshed, investigators said.

Mujahidur Rahman and Shamim Billah whipped Abrar with a skipping rope, they added.

Nazmus Sadat, Muntasir Al Jemi, Ehteshamul and Khandaker Tabakkarul Islam Tanvir slapped the victim.

Another expelled BCL leader SM

Mahmud alias Setu visited the room and told everyone to keep torturing Abrar.

After Abrar fell sick and fell to the floor, the suspects helped him to his feet and started beating him up again. After a few hours, Abrar started throwing up before becoming motionless.

After he fell sick, Abrar was taken to room-2005. When he became motionless, Anik, Robein, Zion, Mujahid, Nazmus Sadat, Muntasir, Ehteshamul and Morshed took Abrar to the clearing in the stairway between the first and ground floors.

Shakhawat Iqbal Ovi and Abu Nowshad Shakib were present when the victim was taken from his room.

THE INSTIGATORS

Amit Saha attended the meeting on October 4 at the canteen. He also gave consent to evict Abrar from the dorm.

After Abrar became motionless in the early hours of October 7, expelled BCL general secretary Mehedi Hasan Russel called Robein, who along with Anik was going to room-2005. Russel asked them to come to his room. They held a brief meeting there.

Russel then told them to call Chawkbazar Police Station and hand Abrar to police. He told them to tell police that Abrar admitted of being a Shibir activist.

Ishtiaq Ahmed Munna attended the meeting on October 4 evening and regretted on Messenger that he had not been able to be present while Abrar was tortured. He also gave different advice to Robein over phone while Abrar was being beaten up.

Morshed Khan

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my firm belief is that I have no ability to add something new to the country's politics and the advancement of the party," he said.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the letter.

The letter also reads, "Considering my personal grounds only, my realisation is that this is the high time to retire from active politics. After much deliberation, I, therefore, have decided to go into retirement from the Bangladesh Nationalist Party from today."

"Under these circumstances and as a normal procedure, I resign from my party's present vice-chairman post and withdraw my primary membership of the party. It is my earnest request that you will oblige me in the light of my resignation letter under special consideration through relieving me of the aforementioned posts," it said.

At the end of the letter, the former foreign minister wished the BNP chief a good future and hoped she would overcome her present hardship.

Contacted, Morshed told The Daily Star that he had submitted his resignation letter. "I will not say anything more. Everything is in my letter."

Born in Chattogram on August 8, 1940, Morshed's political career started with the Jatiya Party, where he was the treasurer. He became a JP lawmaker in 1986.

When the BNP was in power from 1991 to 1996, Morshed left the JP and joined the BNP. During that time, he was made a special envoy to then prime minister Khaleda Zia.

Subsequently, he became a member of the advisory council and vice-chairman of the party.

Morshed was elected in the 6th, 7th and 8th parliamentary elections with BNP tickets from Chattogram.

He became the foreign minister after he was elected in the 8th national election held in 2001.

In 2008, Morshed could not contest the parliamentary polls as he was convicted and sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment for amassing Tk 1.7 crore wealth illegally and concealing information about wealth worth Tk 91.34 lakh in his wealth statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In the last parliamentary election, he did not get party nomination to contest the election.

He is now facing several cases.

Mali president says stability at stake after deadly army base attack

AFP, Bamako

Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita has appealed for citizens to unite behind the country's army, after the latest deadly militant strike killed more than 40 soldiers.

The president has declared three days of mourning after Friday's attack on an army base in Indelimane, the northeast of the country near the border with Niger.

"In these particularly serious circumstances where the stability and existence of our country are at stake, our only response must be national unity, the sacred union around our national army," he said in a statement Monday night.

He added that the support of foreign forces, including from France, Africa and the United Nations, is "necessary more than ever".