

BCL troubles remain as major irritant

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The reputation of Awami League-led grand alliance government was besmirched, in the first 100 days of its rule, mostly by the ruling party's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

The name of the legendary student organisation, which once had played a key role in the movement for the country's liberation, became synonymous to trouble and embarrassment for Awami League (AL) during its 100 days in power, shadowed by more than 50 violent clashes in educational institutions involving BCL.

The embarrassment became so unbearable that Prime Minister also AL President Sheikh Hasina chose to resign from the post of BCL's organisational leader, in order to distance



herself from the sad mayhem of the young students, for whom she ostensibly dreamt the 'digital' dream.

Since the AL-led grand alliance won the December 29, 2008 parliamentary election with a historic landslide victory, BCL activists got themselves busy with having violent intra

100 DAYS OF AWAMI LEAGUE GOVERNMENT

and inter organisation clashes; beating, maiming and chasing out of dorms and campuses its rival leaders and activists

of pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and pro-Jamaat, Islami Chhatra Shibir over establishing hegemony on educational institutions.

The intra-BCL clashes also had no less to boast about, with the level of violence rivalling the clashes with the real rivals.

Two student leaders were killed, several

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hundred students were injured, and over a dozen educational institutions including four public universities, and three medical colleges were forcefully closed for different periods, due to the martial mastery of the BCL students.

Seven of those educational institutions including two public universities and a medical college are yet to resume academic activities on the campuses.

As intra-BCL clashes were erupting incessantly ignoring government and mother party directions, and criticisms were being raised from different quarters against the BCL atrocities, Sheikh Hasina on March 31 decided to step down from the post of the organisational chief of her student wing.

Some AL presidium members in a meeting even suggested suspending BCL's organisational activities for several months, meeting insiders said.

The meeting decided to implement the law to its full extent and vigour to tackle BCL violence on campuses.

In the parliament, opposition lawmakers scathingly criticised the government for BCL's role in educational institutions.

As a sign of the government's stern adherence to its decision, two BCL central leaders, Ashrafur Rahman and Sohel Rana Mithu, were arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on April 13, on charges of disrupting academic atmosphere in Dhaka University (DU), and the elite crime fighting force is reportedly creating a list of the on-campus traders of violence.

BCL SINCE AL IN POWER

Ignoring Hasina's instructions, armed BCL operatives captured dorm rooms of JCD and Shibir activists in DU. BCL leaders then started extracting

tuition from campus tea-stalls and food shops, and dived into manipulating the tender process for development works on the campus, of course only when they were not busy beating up several hundred rival JCD and Shibir activists with a zealous unity that has become quite rare in BCL lately.

In Chittagong University, BCL activists kept classes stopped for a few days demanding resignation of the vice-chancellor, prompting the university authorities at one point to impose a ban on political activities on campus, apprehending deterioration of law and order.

The Rajshahi University proctor and nine assistant proctors resigned in January in the wake of demonstrations by BCL students there.

Organisational activities of Jahangirnagar University, Jagannath University, and Dhaka Medical College units of BCL are currently suspended following violent intra-organisation clashes on those campuses.

The ingenuity of BCL leaders and activists did not stop there, they also manipulated the honours level admission process in some colleges under the National University in and outside the capital, in a bid to earn some fast cash. After all life in the fast lane of power does seem to require cash.

When asked about the last 100 days' activities of BCL, its President Mahmud Hasan Ripon told The Daily Star that they already asked all units of the organisation to ensure congenial atmosphere on all campuses by any means necessary, and warned them of stern actions against those who will get involved in further clashes.

The nation is eagerly watching.