

## BCL GONE HAYWIRE

# Warnings not working

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The unruly activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League can be reined in only if Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina plays a more serious role, observed some leaders of the ruling Awami League.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, they said extortion, tender manipulation, admission trade and other crimes by BCL men have dented the government's image in last 17 months.

They deplored that despite repeated warnings from the government and party high-ups, Chhatra Leaguers continue doing things that have been embarrassing the government from day one.

The rowdy BCL cadres operate with apparent impunity, as they have the backing of some

influential AL leaders, they alleged.

Wishing not to be named, a senior leader said, "Chhatra League can be controlled if she (Hasina) intervenes seriously. But I doubt if she's sincere enough in this regard."

To turn things around, he added, she must not confine herself to issuing warnings. She will have to follow through to make sure her directives are carried out.

Hasina, also AL president, cut her relations with BCL on April 4 last year as per the Representation of the People Order.

Since taking office, she has announced on several occasions that her government would show zero tolerance for violence in the name of student politics.

She also asked the law enforcers to go tough against the BCL members involved in crimes.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## BCL gone haywire

FROM PAGE 1

But in most cases, her directives went unheeded.

Lately, she has assigned AL organising secretaries Jahangir Kabir Nanak, BM Mojammel Haque and Ahmed Hossain to look after Chhatra League affairs.

Ahmed Hossain claims the situation has "improved a bit" due to their efforts. He however would not elaborate on what they have done since being assigned by the party chief.

Some leaders think the three will not be able to do much, as they can only advise BCL and take no measures.

Meanwhile, AL insiders said several top BCL leaders who shelter the crooked activists are frequently seen at Gono Bhavan. As they are allowed access to the prime minister's residence, they may feel "somewhat protected". And this may be one of the reasons the BCL men are hard to control.

An official of the prime minister's office said as they do not have any instructions from above, they do not bar the student leaders.

Syed Ashrafur Islam, AL general secretary and LGRD minister, recently said the party would have to pay dearly for the activities of its youth and student workers.

Speaking at Srinagar upazila in Munshiganj, he also said AL leaders cannot skirt their responsibilities for the mistakes and misdeeds by Chhatra League and Jubo League.

Many of his party colleagues share the view. They say BCL needs to be checked before it is too late.

measures against the wrongdoers, others think forming new committees with regular students may offer a solution.

Then there are others who want BCL politics to be banned so the Chhatra Leaguers cannot bring any more dishonour on the government.

Leaders of the student body, on the other hand, say the organisation has to be freed from the "clutches of Awami League leaders, lawmakers and former student leaders".

Talking to The Daily Star, BCL Joint General Secretary Iqbal Mahmud Bablu said establishing the chain of command by reconstituting committees across the country with regular students is a must.

Besides, he added, the central committee would have to be made accountable to AL leaders designated by the party president.

Asked what actions have been taken against the wrongdoers, BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon said they would investigate the incidents and take disciplinary measures against those who would be found responsible.

### BCL IN LAST ONE WEEK

At least 50 people including journalists, politicians and police were injured in a clash between Chhatra League factions over student union election at a college in Gopalganj on June 17.

BCL cadres beat up some 25 leaders and workers of Jatiyatbadi Chhatra Dal on Dhaka University campus on

June 21. Annoyed at Chhatra League's excess, some ministers and leaders including Matia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader and Mahbubul Alam Hanif have decided to keep away from the outfit's programmes. The three have even given up talking about the student body, said sources close to them.

Party sources said the AL high command has differences of opinions over how to control student leaders and activists.

While some want sterner

June 21.

On June 22, the ruling party's student activists assaulted the principal of Pabna Government Bulbul College, as the college authorities did not meet their demand for "admission quota".

The following day, admission process at Azizul Haq College in Bogra and Hatia Government College in Noakhali was suspended after BCL workers went on the rampage demanding so-called admission quota.