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Concert at DU cancelled after arson, vandalism

BCL activists behind the attack, witnesses say





Miscreants set fire to the concert stage and other materials at Mall Chattar in the early hours of Saturday. Photo: Collected

DU Correspondent

A concert to celebrate Pahela Baishakh and Chaitra Sankranti on Dhaka University campus was postponed yesterday, after a faction of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists allegedly set fire to equipment and vandalised some 13 refrigerators of the sponsor company early yesterday.

Dhaka University in a press release last night, signed by director (acting) of public relations Mahmud Alam, said the permission for the concert at Mall Chattar was cancelled “due to unavoidable circumstances”.

Earlier in the day, Azam Bin Tareq, head of operations and brand marketing of Akij Food and Beverage Limited, which sponsored the programme, said they had postponed it because of “security concerns”.

“After yesterday's [Friday night] incident, we were told that everything would be under control. But after that, some youths wearing helmets came to the concert venue around 8am and set fire to a music system worth over Tk 40 lakh. We are not feeling secure, and the concert cannot be organised in such a situation,” said Azam.

A number of BCL leaders, wishing anonymity, told this newspaper that supporters of BCL president Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury Shovon were behind the incident that occurred between 12:45am and 1am at Mall Chattar.

Witnesses said a group of BCL leaders, including Bangabandhu Hall unit general secretary Al Amin Rahman, Ziaur Rahman Hall unit president Yousuf Uddin Khan, Jashim Uddin Hall unit president Arif Hossain, Amar Ekushey Hall unit president Ehsan Ullah and general secretaries of Muhsin Hall and Sir AF Rahman Hall units -- Mehedi Hasan Sunny and Mahmudul Hasan Tushar respectively -- led the arson and vandalism.

Soon after the incident, followers of BCL DU unit president Sanjit Chandra Das, general secretary Saddam Hussain and BCL central unit general secretary Golam Rabbani started to gather at the spot.

The three leaders instructed their followers to return to the dormitories and not to get involved in any clashes.

After that, some followers of Ducus AGS Saddam Hussain vandalised the room of BCL's Sir AF Rahman hall unit general secretary Mahmudul Hasan Tushar's room, alleged Tushar.

A BCL activist named Sagor Rahman was also allegedly beaten up.

Several BCL leaders, who were present at the spot last night, said carbonated drink Mojo is the main sponsor of the programme, and they had given a “certain amount” of money to the organisation. The conflict was ensued over sharing of the money.

Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) general secretary Golam Rabbani and assistant general secretary Saddam Hussain claimed that Ducsu and DU unit BCL jointly organised the two-day event, but Ducsu VP Nurul Haq Nur said he was not aware of the programme.

“Chhatra League men have usually been involved in such incidents on the campus. Chhatra League activists are involved this time too,” Nur said about the incident.

Asked about the organiser of the concert, Nur said Ducsu has no involvement with the programme.

An official of Mojo, seeking anonymity, said they had contacted BCL leaders and Ducsu cultural affairs secretary, and did not contact the Ducsu VP as he is not a BCL activist.

Mojo, on the cover photo of its Facebook page, earlier wrote that DU Unit BCL was an associate of their programme, but on Friday night they uploaded a different cover page which said Ducsu and DU unit BCL are jointly organising the concert.

At 2:54am yesterday, Ducsu AGS Saddam Hussain wrote on Facebook that DU unit BCL and Ducsu are jointly organising the concert, but edited the post around 6pm yesterday, which said DU unit BCL organised the concert.

Chhatra League president Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury Shovon alleged that he was not notified of the programme, despite being the president of the organisation whereas the other three leaders claimed that Shovon was aware of the event.

However, a number of posts shared by BCL men on social media mentioned that BCL in association with Ducsu organised the concert on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh -- to be observed today.

Contacted, Shovon said the programme was organised under the banner of BCL but he did not know anything about it despite being the president of the organisation.

“I do not know who set the fire. I did not give such instruction to anyone. I was hurt the way the three leaders are blaming me,” said Shovon

Ducusu GS Golam Rabbani and AGS Saddam Hussain could not be reached over phone despite repeated attempts.

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