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Protests for justice spread

Muktadir Rashid and Arifur Rahman | Updated at 01:58am on October 09, 2019



Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology vice-chancellor Saiful Islam talks to students who continue protests on the campus seeking justice for killing of Abrar in Dhaka on Tuesday. — Sourav Lasker

Protests flared across the country on Tuesday demanding justice for the murder of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology student Abrar Fahad Rabbi on Monday by members of the university unit of ruling Awami League-backed student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League.

The aggrieved students of the university continued their agitation and placed a set of demands including rustication of all students involved in the murder, withdrawal of the Sher-e-Bangla Hall provost and suspension of student politics on the campus for an indefinite period.

The students also declared suspension of academic activities, including examinations and the October 14 admission tests, until the charge sheet in the murder case was submitted.

More protests were scheduled for today.

The engineering university students kept their vice-chancellor Saiful Islam confined to his office block until 9:45pm on Tuesday for their demands.

They withdrew the confinement after he stated that he was in agreement with the demands in principle and he would meet those that were at his disposal but some of the demands were beyond his authority.

As hundreds of students took to the streets at Dhaka University, the engineering university and other major educational institutions in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country throughout the day, police investigators said that they started interrogating the 10 Chhatra League leaders following their arrest since Monday and continued efforts to arrest more suspects.

The case filed by Abrar's father Barkat Ullah on Monday was transferred to the Detective Branch of police for investigation and officials said that they were trying to arrest other perpetrators based on the CCTV footage or who were named by the students in custody.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police joint commissioner (detective branch) Mahbub Alam said that they were investigating the case in earnest.

At least three detective officials said that 21-year-old Abrar, a second-year student of electrical and electronic engineering, was tortured in two phases, and the perpetrators called the university physician when his condition deteriorated.

One of the three officials said that Abrar was tortured for the first two hours at room 2011 on the first floor of the university's five-storey Sher-e-Bangla Hall after he was brought up from his room 1011 on the ground floor of the hall by Chhatra League leaders Ehteshamul Rabbi Tanim and Muntasir Al Jemy for interrogation over his Facebook status.

'In the first phase, he was tortured between 8:30pm and 10:00pm. Then they relented and started again from 12:00am for one more hour. As his condition worsened he was shifted to room 2005 at about 1:15am in order to move him to a hospital,' said the detective official.

He said that the 10 suspects told the investigators that they called ambulance between 1:15am and about 2:00am and then called in the physician.

As neither an ambulance nor the doctor appeared forthwith, the perpetrators took Abrar to the staircase in a precarious condition where he died without treatment, the official said referring to their interrogation.

He also disclosed that BUET Chhatra League organising secretary Mehedi Hasan Robin of chemical engineering, information and research affairs secretary Anik Sarkar of mechanical engineering and deputy social welfare secretary Ifti Mosharraf Sakal of biomedical engineering department tortured Abrar most.

'Robin and Sakal now repent for what they did but Anik has no regret,' said the official, adding, 'The CCTV footage which went viral does not necessary show the perpetrators'.

DB deputy commissioner Razib Al Masud said, 'We are still trying to ascertain the role of each individual involved in or arrested over the killing.'

Dhaka metropolitan magistrate Sadbir Yasir Ahsan Chowdhury on Tuesday remanded the arrested 10 Chhatra League leaders and activists in police custody for interrogation for five days.

Investigators, in their custody, were interrogating BUET Chhatra League general secretary Mehedi Hasan Russel of civil engineering, vice-president Muhtasim Fuad of civil engineering, organising secretary Mehedi Hasan Robin, information and research affairs secretary Anik Sarkar, deputy social welfare secretary Ifti Mosharrf Sakal, sports secretary Meftahul Islam Zion of naval architecture and marine engineering, Ishtiaq Hasan Munna of mechanical engineering, Muntasir Alam Jemi of chemical engineering, Muzahidur

Rahman Muzahid of civil engineering departments and Khandaker Tabakkharul Islam Tanvir.

On Tuesday, the detectives in a series of operations also arrested Shamsul Arefin Rafat, 21, of mechanical engineering, at capital's Jigatola at about 3:30pm, Moniruzzaman Monir, 21, of water resources at Demra and Mohammad Akash of civil engineering from Baipail near Gazipur in the evening.

As of 8:30pm on Tuesday, Razib said, so far they had arrested 13 Chhatra League leaders and activists suspected in the murder. 'The operation is going on to arrest all the suspects.'

The detectives were also looking for Majedul Islam, Hossen Mohammad Toha, Mohammad Jisan, Mohammad Shamim Billah, Mohammad Shahadat, Mohammad Morshed and Mohammad Moaj, who were named in the complaint filed with the Chawkbazar police station.

Abrar reportedly made Facebook posts on October 5 criticising the government for allowing India to withdraw water from the Feni River of Bangladesh, access the Mongla seaport and for agreeing to supply gas to India.

Tension persisted on the university campus demanding justice as around 1,000 police personnel were deployed at BUET and its adjacent Dhaka University to avoid untoward incidents.

Following the murder, students continued protest at Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Rajshahi University and other universities for second day in their respective campus demanding justice.

Their demands included expulsion of the accused from the BUET, holding the trial at a Speedy Trial Tribunal, stopping 'rag culture' in the campus, and bearing the cost related to trial of the case by the BUET.

The demonstrators made the demands at a press briefing in front of the BUET vice-chancellor's office.

The protesting students locked up the vice-chancellor's office and the academic and administrative buildings.

Several hundreds of students brought out processions that paraded several streets on the campus.

Though the students burst into protests against the killing, vice-chancellor of the university Saiful Islam did not make an appearance for 30 hours citing his sickness.

As he appeared at about 6:30pm, he promised to meet those of the demands placed by the students were under his jurisdiction.

He, however, further said that he could do nothing for the demands which were not under his jurisdiction.

The students, however, continued protests until the report was filed at 10:00pm.

BUET teachers association extended their support with protesters while Dhaka University Teachers Association demanded punishment of the culprits.

Meanwhile, student of Dhaka University held Abrar's namaz e janaza without the body in front of Raju memorial sculpture on the campus.

Later, about 1,000 students of the university brought out a procession with token coffin of Abrar and paraded Dhaka University and BUET campus.

Students of seven colleges affiliated with Dhaka University formed a human chain in front of Dhaka College seeking justice for Abrar.

Students of Jahangirnagar University on Tuesday blockade the Dhaka-Aricha highway adjacent to the main gate of the university from 1:30pm to 2:30pm protesting at the killing, reported New Age JU correspondent.

Students of Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology in Gazipur staged protests and formed human chain demanding punishment of the killers.

Chittagong University students, student of different educational institute of Brahmanbaria and Sylhet also formed human chain protesting at the murder.

In Mymensingh, Progressive Students Alliance hold protest rally at city's Jahangir-Firoj Chhatar protesting the killing, reported New Age Mymensingh Correspondent.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Bangladesh secretary general Nur Hossain Kasemi in a statement demanded punishment of Abrar's killers.

Agitated locals of Abrar staged demonstration against the brutal killing of Abrar Fahad in Kushtia on Tuesday.



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