



Four student leaders allegedly injured in an attack by Chattra League¹ members in Narayangonj

Fact finding Report

Odhikar

At around 12 noon on June 8, 2011, Mostafizur Rahman Titu, the leader of Bangladesh Awami League supported student organisation, Bangladesh Chattra League, and 20/25 associates allegedly attacked four 'leftist' leaders, in Narayangonj Tolaram Government College, who were distributing leaflets in support of a hartal (general strike). The hartal was being called to protest the price hike of diesel and the enhanced ticket price of buses on the Narayangonj-Dhaka route. A non-political organization, *Jatri Odhikar Shongrokkhon Forum*² called for a half-day hartal on June 20, 2011 in Narayanganj. Shaokat Ali (24), the General Secretary of the Narayangonj branch of the *Shomajtantrik Chattra Front*³ supported by Bangladesh Shomajtantrik Dol BSD⁴, its member Joyonto Saha (20) and Tarikul Shujon (26), the President of Bangladesh Chattra Federation, Narayangonj district branch and its member Nahid Bappi (20) were distributing leaflets in support of the hartal. It has been alleged that Titu and his assistants harassed those student leaders physically after confining them in the college student lounge.

Odhikar conducted a fact finding mission into the matter. During this they interviewed:

- Shaokat Ali, General Secretary, Shomajtantrik Chattra Front, Narayangonj district branch
- Jayonto Saha, member, Shomajtantrik Chattra Front, Narayangonj district branch
- Tarikul Shujon, President, Bangladesh Chattra Federation, Narayangonj district branch
- Mostafizur Rahman Titu, Chattra League Leader, Tolaram Government College branch

¹ Student wing of Awami League

² A group created to protect the rights of passengers.

³ The Socialist Students Front

⁴ The Bangladesh Socialist Party. A left-leaning political party

- Advocate Mahbubur Rahman Ismail, Convener, Shomajtantrik Sromik Front, Narayangonj district branch

Jayonto Saha (20), injured person

Jayonto Saha told Odhikar that a meeting was held between Progotishil Chatra Jote⁵ and Jatri Odhikar Shongrokkhon Forum in Narayangonj. It was decided in the seminar that on 20 June 2011, leaflets in support of the hartal against increased bus fare would be distributed in all educational institutions of Narayangonj. The Progotishil Chattra Jote divided into different groups to distribute the leaflets. At 12 noon on June 8, 2011, according to the decision taken in the meeting, he and student leader, Tarikul Shujon started distributing leaflets among the students in the main building of Tolaram Government college. After distributing leaflets on the ground and first floors, he went to the second floor and there he gave leaflets to the students as well as to the members of Chattra League. The Chattra League supporters read the leaflets, made fun of them, and insulted the students distributing them, causing them to go back downstairs. While descending to the ground floor, the Chattra League members asked them the reason of distributing leaflets. Tarikul told them that they were distributing leaflets as a part of the movement against the increased bus fare and for the welfare of the students. These would reduce the transport cost of the students. He added that this was not an activity of any particular student organisation, rather other organisations should also join them. The Chattra League members took them to Titu, the local leader of the Bangladesh Chattra League, who was in a student student lounge, called the 'Chattra Shongshod'. Titu asked him and Tarikul who they were working for. Tarikul replied him that they were part of the Nagorik Committee, which was represented by many other institutions like the Communist Party and BASHOD. Titu verbally abused Tarikul when the latter said he was a member of the Gono Shonghoti Movement and the President of the Narayangonj district unit of the Chattra Federation.

Jayonto said that the supporters of Chattra League who were present, got angry at Tarikul and at one point, they snatched his mobile phone away. When Jayonto tried to save Tarikul, the Chattra League supporters also slapped him and pulled his ears. After some time, he saw Shaokat and Nahid entering the room to save them from the attackers. Seven or eight of the Chattra League supporters started

⁵ Progressive Students Coalition.

harassing Shaokat and Nahid and making perverted comments. Jayonto said he was punched in his right eye, slapped and kicked. While leaving the room, the Chattra League supporters pushed them and hit their heads against the wall. When they came outside, Jayonto was the last person leaving the room. Then they kicked him and asked not to come to the college again. He went to Chashara to inform Rafiur Rabbi, the convener of Jatri Odhikar Shongrokkhon Forum.

He also said that before this incident, whenever supporters of Chattra Front and Chattra Federation came to distribute leaflets, they had the same experience. He commented that Tolaram college has serious transportation problems. There is no hostel either, so students have to travel long distances. Students are usually unable to arrive for classes on time. He said that whenever the Progotishil Chattra Shongothon comes forward to talk about the plight of the general students, they have to face the rage and attacks of Chattra League supporters. He said that many students witnessed the incident from the veranda of the college. Obaydur Rahman, the member of Narayongonj district branch of Chattra Federation, took them to Dr. Nazrul Islam of Shurjer Hashi Hospital for first aid. They were later taken to the 200-bed hospital in Narayangonj for complete treatment.

Shaokat Ali (24), injured person

Shaokat Ali told Odhikar that at around 12 noon on June 8, 2011, he and Nahid were distributing leaflets in support of the hartal, called for withdrawal of the price hike on bus fare on the Dhaka-Narayangonj route. At one point, while distributing the leaflets, Mostafizur Rahman Titu, the local Chattra League leader, along with his supporters took him to the so-called Chattra Shongshod⁶ (a room inside the student lounge). There, he saw Jayonto and Tarikul being beaten, slapped and kicked by several Chattra League supporters. When he tried to stop them, they beat him too. Chattra League leader Titu identified himself as the Vice President of the Narayangonj Chattra League, despite the fact that no student election had been held in Tolaram college for a long time. It is alleged that Titu made the student lounge his territory.

Shaokat said that the Chattra League developed sovereignty under the protection of the government and superseded other student organisations. To avoid further confrontation, they distributed leaflets outside the campus as part of their plan.

Tarikul Shujon (26), injured person

⁶ 'Student Parliament' – probably a student student lounge set up to settle 'disputes' by the Chattra League.

Tarikul Shujon told Odhikar that at around 12 noon of the day of the incident, he and Jayonto Saha of Shomajtantrik Chattra Front were distributing leaflets. Six or seven Chattra League supporters took them to the ground floor student lounge from the third floor to be present before Titu. Titu asked them for an explanation of their actions and where they got the permission to distribute leaflets. Tarikul said that the decision of increasing the bus fare was not fair and reasonable, that is why they were distributing the leaflets. Then, on the signal of Titu, all the Chattra League supporters present there attacked them. He was seriously injured in his neck and back. He and the other injured students got admitted to the Narayangonj hospital.

He informed that the secretary of the Awami League Narayongonj Branch, Anwar Hossain is also involved in the Jatri Odhikar Songrokkhon Forum'. People from different political, social and cultural parties are also involved. But, the Government supported Chattra League of Tolaram College not only opposed it but also attacked them very brutally.

Mostafizur Rahman Titu, Chattra League Leader , alleged abuser

Mostafizur Rahman Titu told Odhikar that at around 12 noon of June 8, 2011, the members of Progotishil Chattra Jote were distributing leaflets in support of the hartal. He came to know about this from the general students. Then a few students brought the student leader of the Jote to him. In the student lounge, he asked the leader the reason behind the hartal. He was told about the hartal of 20 June called by Jatri Odhikar Shongrokkhon Forum. Titu asked the student leaders whether they had arranged any discussion with the bus owners or not. He said that regarding this issue the bus owners might have some reasoning of their own. Then he told them that as Tolaram College is a government college, they would need the permission of the Principal to distribute leaflets. He requested them to take the permission of the Principal and then left the campus. He said that he did not know anything about the attack on the leaders of Progotishil Chattra Jote and came to know from the newspaper next day that the hartal activists had been attacked on his orders. The whole liability of attacking the student leaders had been unjustly put on his shoulders. He does not know who called the attack and no student leader came to him to complain against the attackers.

He said that if anyone from Chattra League is involved in this then the Awami League would take proper steps against them.

Advocate Mahbubur Rahman Ismail, convener of Shomajtantrik Sromik Front⁷, Narayongonj

Advocate Mahbubur Rahman told Odhikar that at around 12 noon on June 8, 2011, Jatri Odhikar Shongrokkhon Forum called for a half day hartal on June 20 in Narayongonj in demand for withdrawal of the increased price of bus fare. In support of that hartal, the leaders of Progotishil Chattra Jote were distributing leaflets in Tolaram College. At the time of distributing the leaflets, Chattra League supporters attacked Shaokat and Jayonto of Shomajtantrik Chattra Front and Tarikul and Nahid of Chattra Federation. He said that the government increased the price of diesel by 2 taka per liter and CNG by 8 taka per cubic meter. According to this, the bus fare was supposed to increase by 10 paisa per kilometer but the Government increased that to 35 paisa in the routes of Dhaka to Narayongonj, Munshiganj, Gazipur, Manikgonj and fixed the fare of the CNG bus at 1.45 taka per kilometer. Then, the bus owners increased the fare according to their own calculation. To deceive the passengers, they fixed the fare of 22 taka to 28 taka. 95% of the passengers could not accept the increased fare.

The bus owners of Narayongonj are controlled by a group. The bus owners have to give a large amount of their earnings to this group as subscription. This money is shared between the local politicians and the administration. This subscription given by the bus owners is becoming a pressure on the public of Narayongonj. That is why, the Progotishil and leftist political organisations have come under the banner of Jatri Odhikar Shongrokkhon Forum to protest against this unreasonable price hike. To ensure the rights of the general people, the leaders of Progotishil Chattra Jote became the victims of planned attacks of Chattra League. The political influence and the support of administration gave Chattra League this courage.

Odhikar's statement:

Odhikar took statement from the victim student leaders and the leaders of their party and also from the Chattra League leader who attacked them. From the statement of student leaders, the members of Chattra League confined them and then abused them. Mostafizur Rahman Titu, the local Chattra League leader denied the complaint against him. Odhikar collected information about the abuse and the condition of their treatment in Narayongonj hospital. The student leaders informed that the leftist parties are not being able to carry out their organisational activities in Tolaram College. The Chattra League members stopped the activities

⁷ Socialist Workers Front.

of the Science Club. They kept contact with their party members secretly by avoiding the Chattra League members and distributed leaflets and bulletins of their organisational activities.

Odhikar demands impartial investigation of the incident.

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