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4 RU teachers get 2yrs jail sentence

FROM PAGE 1

leave en masse on July 26 to protest Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's arrest, bringing out a silent procession on the campus on August 21, and holding a secret meeting to instigate violence the next day.

The judge said photos published in a Bangla daily prove that the accused four teachers were involved in the silent procession on August 21. "As there was a state of emergency in the country, bringing 'out of the procession violated [the EPR] rules," he said.

"All accused persons are teachers of a highest educational institute... case documents showed their past records and conducts are not bad. Considering this, the court thinks the lowest punishment is apt for the proven allegation," said Judge Ruhul.

He added that the prosecution could not prove the charges of observing a strike in the name of leave en masse and holding a secret meeting to instigate students to attack law enforcement.

"There is no law against taking leave en masse and there was no evidence that these teachers took such leave... The photos of the secret meeting was taken from behind. The investigation officer could not identify anyone except Prof M Abdus Sobhan in the photo, nor could he say what was told in the meeting," the judge said.

On August 21 this year, a few RU teachers brought out a silent procession on the campus, protesting the previous day's police attack on Dhaka University students.

RU students called a strike the next day. A rickshaw puller was killed on that day, around 200 including police and journalists were injured, vehicles were torched and properties including the vice chancellor's residence were damaged during daylong clashes between the police and students on and around the RU campus.

The student demonstrations also demanded withdrawal of the state of emergency and removal of the police from the campus.

On August 23 night, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested Prof Saidur Rahman and Prof Abdus Sobhan, and Moloy Bhowmik the next day.

The then officer-in-charge of Motihar Police Station Khondoker Ferdous Ahmed filed the case against the three teachers on August 26. The teachers were placed on remand and taken to the Joint Interrogation Cell in the capital on August 28.

The charge sheet of the case, including the names of Dulal Biswas, Selim Reza and Abdullah Al Mamun, was submitted on September 1. The three teachers surrendered before the court four days later.

Metropolitan Magistrate SM Fazlul Karim framed the charges on September 17 and the case was shifted to the court of Rubul Amin following separation of the judiciary on November 1.

Advocates Golam Arif Tipu, Hamidul Haque, Mansur Ahmed and Aslam Sarkar moved for the accused and Public Prosecutor Masum Ahmed Tipu and court Sub-Inspector Shamsul Ahmed for the state.

REACTION

Wives and relatives of the convicted four RU teachers broke down in tears as the teachers were taken to jail following the verdict.

Defence lawyer Golam Arif Tipu said they will challenge the verdict in the district and sessions judge's court.

"The punishment was given on the basis of disputed photos. The logic that relieved the two teachers are also applicable to others," he said.

Eminent litterateur Prof Hasan Azizul Haque of RU said the verdict was unexpected. "The punishment is too stringent for the teachers. We hoped that all the teachers would be acquitted," he said.

RUVC Prof Altaf Hossain refused to make any comment, saying, "We are bound to abide by the court rulings."

The wives of the convicted also did not make any comment, but said they are bracing for troubles ahead.

The two released teachers did not meet the media until the eve-

ning.

Prof Saidur Rahman told The Daily Star in the evening, "I was surprised at the time of my arrest as I knew I did not commit any crime knowingly. I am glad that I am released after a long legal battle. I have got justice. It proved my innocence.

"The judgment against four other teachers has, however, saddened me," the former RU VC said, adding, "I hope the convicted teachers will be freed by the higher court."

Our RU correspondent reports: Hearing the verdict, students of the

mass communication department broke down in tears and started gathering in front of the department. They met department Chairman Prof Khademul Islam and sought his permission to stage demonstrations.

Prof Khademul told journalists that he had asked the students to respect the court ruling.

A huge number of police and intelligence men in uniform and plainclothes were deployed on the campus, especially at the mass communication department, from the morning.

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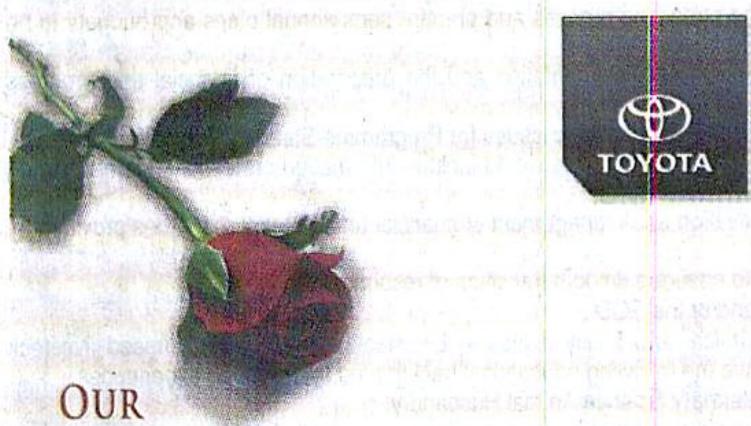
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