

The incident could have been averted

2 lakh students victims of conflict between DU, NU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thursday's incident at Shahbagh that led to Siddiqur Rahman's eye injuries could have been averted had the authorities told the agitating college students that their demands had already been met two days before.

Government Titumir College student Siddiqur Rahman was in unbearable pain as both his eyes were badly damaged in police action during a student demonstration demanding announcement of exam schedules.

Police lobbed teargas shells and used truncheons on the students of seven colleges affiliated with Dhaka University. Several students were injured and the police excess drew flak from different quarters.

DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique had a meeting with the college principals at the university last Tuesday. The meeting had decided to announce the schedules of Honour's and Master's exams.

But the students who had been agitating over the last few months demanding the announcement of the schedule were in the dark. They were not notified about the development.

Instead of telling the demonstrating students, their college principals waited for a circular from the DU.

Some principals claimed that they had verbally told the heads of different departments about the meeting decision.

On Sunday, the DU registrar's office sent the circular to the colleges. The authorities hung the circular on notice boards of all departments.

Seeking anonymity, a teacher of Government Titumir College said, "The decision should have been immediately communicated to the students, given the fact that they are already in a movement. But that didn't happen. If the students were informed about the decision, such an incident would not have happened."

"The Dhaka University cannot shrug off its responsibility as the demonstrators are its students after the affiliation. It could have sent a representative to Shahbagh that day [on July 20] to defuse the tension," he added.

Around two lakh students are studying in seven colleges -- Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5



Sequential grabs of a footage recorded on July 20 at Shahbagh depict how Siddiqur Rahman (marked) got injured when a policeman fired a teargas shell.

Cops smell sabotage, video shows otherwise

FROM PAGE 16

An unidentified police official, who was at the rear of a band of policemen, ran towards the procession yards ahead and fired a teargas shell at the students at close range.

No one was seen in the footage throwing anything at the law enforcers or damaging any property.

Injured, Siddiqui was lying on the road for about two minutes with blood oozing from his eyes but police did not help him. Some unidentified people came forward and took him to hospital.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia, after visiting the victim at the National Institute of Ophthalmology yesterday, told reporters, "I have talked to Siddiqui and saw his injury marks. A teargas shell or a projectile cannot injure both eyes at the same time."

He went on, "If a single object had hit him, his forehead or nose would have been damaged. But there is no injury in his forehead or nose. Siddiqui too said he had suffered a single hit and then blacked out. The question is how he was hurt?"

"We will investigate how he got the injury. We will also look into whether there was any sabotage from any other quarter."

The DMP commissioner also said they would take action if it is found that policemen were negligent in discharging duties or they were doing excesses.

Talking about Thursday's incident, Inspector General of Police Shahidul Hoque said police usually do not lob teargas canisters this way. Teargas shells have to be fired upwards at an angle of 45 degree, reads a report of the DMP News.

"It looked unusual," he said at a programme at Bangladesh Kabadi Federation.

Soon after the incident, police claimed Siddiqui might have been injured being hit by a flowerpot or a brick chip thrown by anyone from the protesters.

But talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Siddiqui said, "There was no chance that I was hit by a flowerpot or a brick chip. How is it possible when I was in the front of the rally, facing the policemen?"

"I was only a yard away from police ... Police might have fired [teargas shell] at me directly."

He said police were taking away a protester. "I ran to save him. All of a sudden something hit my eyes very hard and I fell down... I passed out," he said lying on the bed of National Institute of Ophthalmology in Agargaon.

Member of a poor family of Tarakanda in Mymensingh, Siddiqui is a third-year political science student at Titumir College.

Currently, he cannot see with his right eye. The left eye responded to light once or twice when doctors removed the bandage on Sunday.

There is still a chance, however slim, that his left eye will recover, but nothing can be said for sure about the other eye, said Dr Iftekhar Md Munir at the hospital.

The physician had earlier said Siddiqui suffered a "blunt" injury in his eyes which were hit by some thick and heavy objects. His eyes and face were swollen due to the injury.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, after visit-

ing the student at the hospital, said, "Siddiqui will be sent abroad for better treatment, if needed."

A health ministry source told The Daily Star that a hospital in Chennai is being contacted. Siddiqui will be taken to the Indian city anytime soon. The process for issuance of his passport is underway.

Quader, also road transport minister, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed concern over Siddiqui's condition at yesterday's cabinet meeting.

Thanking the PM, Siddiqui said, "I just want to get back my eyes..."

"I had hope, I still have. I am engaged in some social work. I pray that I can serve people. They have shown their love for me. I will dedicate my life for them till the last day."

He added the protesters on Thursday had no intention to cause violence and they did not do that. "No one threw bricks at police ... No one can prove anything like that."

The authorities of seven government colleges -- Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul

Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College and Government Titumir College -- announced the exam dates following the protest.

Police on Thursday night filed a case against around 1,200 unnamed students of the seven colleges on charges of attempting to kill policemen, rioting with lethal weapons and damaging property.

Witnesses and students say the allegations are false. Some onlookers, who witnessed the protest at Shahbagh, saw no brick chips or sticks, let alone any arms, in the hands of the protesters.

The other charges include obstructing police from discharging duties and holding unlawful assembly.

Asked whether the case against the students would be withdrawn, IGP Shahidul said there is no scope for withdrawal of the case. "We will ensure that the case is probed impartially," he added.

Police have formed two committees to investigate the incident.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with the winners of National Film Award-2015 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

PM defends section 57

FROM PAGE 1

asked how many newsmen were sued under the section.

"It [section 57] was not enacted to harass journalists. Action would be taken under the section against anyone who wants to harm the country, writes against it, or against any person intentionally out of personal vengeance," one of the ministers quoted Hasina as saying.

"If section 57 was not there, then how action would be taken against someone who wants to harm the country or malign others?"

"It was enacted so that journalists could work within certain rules and procedures," the minister quoted the PM as saying.

Rights activists and journalists have been demanding repeal of section 57, saying it contains vague wordings, allowing its misuse against newspersons and social media users.

They say the section goes against the people's right to freedom of expression and free speech and it has been used as a tool to muzzle the press and freedom of expression, which is guaranteed by the constitution.

Editors' Council and Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) have demanded the govern-

ment fully repeal the section and refrain from introducing similar provisions in any new law.

They also expressed concern over the draft Digital Security Act as section 19 of the proposed law contains all the anti-free press elements of section 57.

Amid criticisms, Law Minister Anisul Huq on several occasions said section 57 would be removed. The minister on July 9 said the government would make a decision about it while finalising the draft of Digital Security Act next month.

Meanwhile, cases filed under the section are on the rise.

According to a source at the Cyber Tribunal in Dhaka, around 700 cases have so far been filed under section 57 since 2013 when the act was amended with stringent punishment.

Twenty-three journalists were sued under the section since March 1 this year and most of them were sued for their reports.

In separate statements, Editors' Council and Noab demanded withdrawal of all cases filed against journalists under the section.

However, Inu in parliament on July 12 rejected allegations that section 57 was being used for harassing jour-

ists.

He said, "I don't think keeping section 57 is against human rights. It's not true that the law is applicable only for journalists ... The law was made for 16 crore people."

"There are 2,800 registered newspapers and 1,800 online news portals in the country and several thousand journalists are working there. A very few journalists were arrested under section 57 of the ICT Act and they are getting bail when they are going to court."

Later, journalist leaders blasted Inu for the comments.

At a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club on July 18, leaders of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Dhaka Union of Journalists demanded immediate scrapping of the controversial provision.

Meanwhile, yesterday's cabinet meeting sent back the draft of Bangladesh Sangbad Sanstha-2017 Act with some observations for recasting it.

The cabinet also asked the information ministry to place the draft before it again after making the changes, said meeting sources.

First batch of hajj pilgrims reaches Jeddah

UNB, Dhaka

The first hajj flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying 418 pilgrims took off from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday morning.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Rashed Khan Menon, Religious Affairs Minister Motiur Rahman and top officials of the two ministries saw the pilgrims off at the airport.

The Biman flight which left Dhaka at 7:55am reached an airport in Jeddah around 11:13am (local time), said Biman General Manager (public relations) Shakil Meraz.

Meanwhile, two more hajj flights left the Shahjalal airport yesterday. The 2nd and 3rd flights, carrying 419 pilgrims each, left for Saudi Arabia at 11:55am and 7:55pm.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the Hajj Programme-2017 at the Hajj Camp in the city's Ashkona on Saturday.

A total of 177 flights will carry

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

2 Shariatpur men admits killing girl

A CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Two men arrested over the murder of a school girl in Shariatpur confessed their involvement in the crime, said police sources.

The body of the third grader was recovered from a jute field, about a kilometre away from her home on Saturday, a week after she had gone missing.

Her eyes, heart, liver, kidneys, uterus and some other organs were missing.

At a press conference yesterday, Additional Superintendent of Police Ehsan Shah of Madaripur said the arrestees -- Farid Sheikh and Zakir Sheikh -- were neighbours of the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Killings, rights violation

FROM PAGE 1

Her own movements had been severely restricted and access to crisis-hit areas remained off-limits even to international organisations, she said, adding that people who met her had faced harassment, and the government had sought to place unprecedented preconditions on her visit.

The special rapporteur, who visited Yangon and Nay Pyi Taw as well as parts of Rakhine, Shan, and Kayin states, said she had been "astonished" at the government attempts to limit her activities and movements.

"I am disappointed to see the tactics applied by the previous government still being used."

"I understand the new government wishes to normalise its relations with the United Nations, but Myanmar must first become a country that deserves less attention and scrutiny."

"We are told not to expect Myanmar to transition into a democracy overnight - that it needs time and space," she noted.

"But in the same way, Myanmar should not expect to have its close scrutiny removed or its special monitoring mechanisms dismantled overnight. This cannot happen until there is real and discernible progress on human rights."

The UN expert noted that the authorities have already recognised that state protection and security must extend not only to the Rakhines but also the Muslim communities.

She, however, said, "The government must take concrete steps in this regard, including investigating all alleged violations, ending discriminatory practices, and restoring freedom of movement."

She said around 120,000 people from the area were still living in camps in Myanmar after fleeing their homes, and there was little prospect of a long-term solution.

"Some people were told they would be in the camps for three days, but this has turned into five long years," she added.

Rohingya refugees have been a big headache for Bangladesh as it has been hosting 300,000 to 500,000 Myanmar Muslims for over three decades. They fled to Bangladesh whenever there were crackdowns by Myanmar security forces.

After the latest crackdown that began on October 9, 2016, some 75,000 more people took refuge in Bangladesh.

In addition, some 33,000 registered Rohingyas have been staying in two UNHCR refugee camps while another 300,000 Myanmar's nationals have been living illegally in Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Bandarban, and Rangamati districts for years.

Lee, a South Korean national and a professor at Sungkyunwan University in Seoul, would present the full report of her visit to the UN General Assembly in October.

Japan kicks

FROM PAGE 16

raise contract workers' pay, and curb abuse of labour laws. Telework could be another way to reform working practices that some say are behind the times.

"Once the Olympics start it will be hard to get to work, so we are doing this as an experiment," said Takashi Kozu, 61, president of the Ricoh Institute of Sustainability and Business.

"The lifestyles of younger generations are changing, so firms should offer alternative work styles to maintain employees' incentive."

Kozu said he worked from home yesterday morning, planned to attend an off-site meeting in the afternoon and would not show up in the office

until early evening.

Telework is more common in other countries, especially in the information technology sector, where employees regularly use teleconferencing or log on from the neighbourhood cafe.

But it has been slow to catch on in other industries in Japan, partly because firms have put a lot of emphasis on being physically present at the office, often for 12 hours or more.

But Japan, Inc is starting to change its ways and introduce more flexible work hours. As the population ages, the labour force is shrinking at an alarming rate, and a hard-driving work culture makes it difficult to attract and retain workers.