

6 protest organisers still in DB custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six organisers of the quota reform protest were still in the custody of Detective Branch yesterday.

Their family members were allowed to meet the organisers around 2:00pm inside the DB office.

Detectives picked up the six – Nahid Islam, Asif Mahmud, Abu Baker Majumder, Hasnat Abdullah, Sarjis Alam, and Nusrat Tabassum – between Friday and Sunday. The DB kept them in its custody for what it claimed is “to ensure their security”.

After the family members’ meeting with the organisers, Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (DB) of DMP, said the organisers would be freed soon.

“We are talking to them, their family members. We think that they will soon return to their families,” he told reporters in front of the DB office on Minto Road, responding to a query on how long the organisers would be kept in custody.

Asked about the allegation of forcing the organisers to withdraw their protest programme, Harun termed the allegation “a rumour”.

“I’m humbly requesting [you] not to spread rumours. The DB is a place of trust where no one was forcibly

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Students disperse as sound grenades were lobbed at them by cops at the Cheragi Pahar Mor in the port city. The protesters had gathered there to press for their nine-point demand yesterday afternoon. *Right top*, police stationed near the capital's National Press Club to avert protesters, who had a pre-scheduled programme there yesterday afternoon. *Right bottom*, university teachers gathered at the Aparajeyo Bangla in DU, during the Anti-Repression Teachers Rally, where they called for an immediate end to the harassment and mass arrests of students.

PHOTOS: STAR

Don't mock the nation

FROM PAGE 1

and Sarjis Alam were picked up on July 27 and Nusrat Tabassum on July 28.

In photos and footage provided by the DB on Sunday, they were seen having food inside a room at the DB office. The DB also distributed a video clip in which Nahid was seen calling off their protest programme.

During yesterday's hearing on the petition, lawyers ZI Khan Panna, Sara Hossain, Aneek R Haque and Manzur-Al-Matin placed arguments before the bench supporting the petition.

Additional attorneys general SM Munir Mohammad Mehedi Hassan Chowdhury and Sk Md Morshed opposed it.

The bench also heard arguments from senior lawyer Md Azahar Ullah Bhuiyan.

ZI Khan Panna told the court that what was taking place in the name of the spirit of the Liberation War cannot be acceptable at all.

He said the students cannot stay in the dorms and homes, their mobile phones are being seized and checked. They cannot go to their academic institutions safely and there is curfew at night. In which country in the world are these happening?

At that, Additional Attorney General SM Munir told ZI Khan Panna that he should make such arguments in the political arena.

Sara Hossain then told the HC that six protest coordinators have been kept detained in violation of the law

and the constitution.

There is no provision in the law, the constitution, and the Appellate Division's guidelines that permit the law enforcers to detain any person in the name of providing safety, she said.

She urged the court to either order the authorities concerned to immediately release the six or produce them before a court.

Aneek R Haque told the HC bench that use of bullets against the students must be stopped.

“Those, who have been shot dead in the movement, are also the assets of the state. We don't want any deaths. There are many ways to control the students' movement,” he argued.

Manzur-Al-Matin argued that the home minister has said 147 people died in the clashes and according to a Prothom Alo report more than 200 people have been killed.

The government has to take the responsibility, he said.

Foreign media, including Al Jazeera, has published reports on the firing on students.

According to Al Jazeera's footage, law enforcers have fired as close as 20 yards away from the protesters, he said, adding that firing on demonstrators from helicopters cannot be allowed.

The six coordinators were made to make a statement from the DB office, he said, adding that Nahid was beaten up.

Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam,

presiding judge of the bench, said there were some political issues that should not be brought before the court.

The court also asked the lawyers not to make any arguments for which the court can be made controversial.

Additional Attorney General Mehedi Hassan Chowdhury said the petition was not acceptable as it urged HC directives to prohibit law enforcers from firing on demonstrations.

“Can the petitioners ensure that BTV Bhaban, Setu Bhaban, Metro rail stations, and hundreds of vehicles and establishments would not be vandalised and torched and the prisoners in jails will not escape?”

Mehedi argued the law enforcers have taken the six coordinators into custody to ensure their security and that they have not been detained or arrested.

But the petitioners said the six have been detained by the DB, he said, arguing that the petition had not been properly prepared.

The court then asked the petitioners to reword.

Additional Attorney General Sk Md Morshed also said the six were not detained or arrested.

The HC then asked if law enforcers could keep the six confined for days without detaining them.

Additional Attorney General Morshed said the family members of the six have not claimed they were detained or arrested and have not filed the petition.

Protesters take to streets again

FROM PAGE 1

students after breaking up a protest by some 100 students in Jamal Khan area yesterday afternoon.

Witnesses said university and college students gathered at Cheragi intersection around 3:00pm to hold a rally. A large number of police, BGB, APBn, and army personnel were deployed in the area.

Tension rose when 100-150 leaders and activists of the Jubo League and Chhatra League, led by Chattogram City Corporation ward-21 Councillor Saibal Das Sumon, reached the area and verbally abused the protesters.

At one stage, the Jubo League and Chhatra League men beat up two students and handed them over to police, who got them on to a prison van.

As some students attempted to free the detainees, police used truncheons.

Protesters then gathered near the Kadam Mubarak mosque and chanted slogans.

Around 4:00pm, police fired stun grenades and teargas canisters at them. Three cops and a journalist, videographer Abu Javed of News 24 TV, were injured in the incident.

Another group of protesters threw brick chunks at police near Andarkilla Shahi Jame Masjid around 5:00pm, prompting law enforcers to fire rubber bullets and teargas at them.

Mostafizur Rahman, deputy commissioner (south) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said police took action as all gatherings and protests are banned during the pause in curfew.

In the capital, law enforcers yesterday detained at least 70 people from different areas.

Abdul Kader, a coordinator of the quota reform protest, on Sunday night announced on social media that they would stage demonstrations in eight locations in the capital – Science Lab, Gate 8 of North South University, Jatiya Press Club, BNS Centre in Uttara, Mirpur-10, ECB Chattar in Mirpur, Rampura, and Mohakhali.

Witnesses said several hundred protesters gathered near the ECB Chattar around noon. Police chased them around 1:00pm when they started chanting slogans.

Law enforcers detained at least 18

demonstrators there.

Police detained at least 10 protesters from Mirpur-10 intersection, 10 from in front of Star Kabab in Dhanmondi, two from Purana Paltan, six from Badda, and 10 from Uttara.

Seeking anonymity, two security staffers of a private university in Bashundhara Residential Area said, “Students were standing in front of gates 1, 2 and 5 of the university since 10:00am. Police detained at least 15 of them and got them on to three police vans until 1:30pm.”

Students at Jahangirnagar University held a protest demanding unconditional release of the coordinators of the quota reform protest and the other detainees.

Several JU teachers expressed solidarity with the protesters.

In Rajshahi, several hundred students of Rajshahi University blocked the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway from 12:20pm to 1:00pm protesting the detention of the six coordinators of the quota reform movement.

They chanted slogans demanding justice for the deaths of the fellow students and those responsible for the deaths be held accountable.

At Barishal University, Chhatra League activists allegedly attacked protesters near the university's administrative building around 2:00pm, leaving at least 15 students injured.

Sujoy Subho, one of the injured, said some 40-50 Chhatra League men, armed with sticks, attacked students when they were discussing their next course of action.

Students of Government Brojomohun (BM) College held a protest in Barisal city's Nathullabad Central Bus Terminal area.

In Noakhali, students blocked the Dhaka-Noakhali highway in front of Noakhali Zilla School from 2:00pm for three hours.

In Thakurgaon, over 200 students took out a procession with black flags demanding justice for the recent killings of students.

In Mymensingh, police broke up a demonstration by students in the city's Firoz-Jahangir Chattar in the afternoon.

In Cumilla, pro-Awami League

men, armed with sticks and iron rods, obstructed around 60 Comilla University students from moving towards the Dhaka Chattogram highway.

The students later staged demonstrations in front of the university around 3:00pm.

In Sylhet, a group of students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology staged a protest at the main entrance to the university at 3:00pm. They later took out a procession.

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi, a cultural platform, could not hold a protest rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday afternoon as the area was cordoned off by law enforcers.

FRESH PROGRAMME

Some coordinators of the quota reform protest yesterday rejected the government's call for nationwide mourning today for those killed in the recent violence.

They urged the students of all educational institutions and the general people to cover their face with red clothes and upload their photos online today instead.

The coordinators made the call in a press release, signed by Mahin Sarker, a coordinator of the Anti-discriminatory Student Movement. Copies of the release were sent to the media around 9:30pm.

“We would like to tell the government that no movement in the history of Bengal could be suppressed by firing at students. Immediately accept our nine-point demand and bring stability to the country,” said the statement.

Their demands include an apology from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, and resignations of Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, Law Minister Anisul Huq, State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mohammad Ali Arafat, and State Minister for Post, Telecommunications, and Information Technology Zunaid Ahmed Palak.

As per the Saturday's decision by the government, the ongoing curfew in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Narsingdi will be relaxed from 7:00am to 6:00pm today.



Govt set to ban Jamaat-Shibir

FROM PAGE 1

officers and hanging [their] bodies. It is essential to root out this anti-national force.”

In 2018, the Election Commission scrapped the registration of Jamaat as a political party, rendering it ineligible to contest elections.

Founded by the controversial Islamist scholar Abul Ala Moududi in 1941, Jamaat had been banned twice before, in 1959 and 1964 in Pakistan, for its communal role.

In 1971, the party had taken a stance against the nation's independence and massacred pro-Liberation activists.

At the beginning of yesterday's meeting, Hasina branded BNP-Chhatra Dal and Jamaat-Shibir as militants, saying they are out to stop the country's development journey, reports UNB.

“The incidents occurring now are not political; rather, they are the acts of militants bent on destroying Bangladesh.”

She also dismissed the notion that the recent unrest was related to the quota reform movement and attributed it instead to malicious intent.

“Their ill motives were visible; the quota reform was not an issue at all.”

According to sources, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon; Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu; Tarikat Federation Chairman Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari; Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua; and Jatiya Party (Manju) General Secretary Sheikh Shahidul

Islam spoke for banning Jamaat.

Accepting the recommendation by the 14-party leaders, Hasina said her government will take measures to ban Jamaat-Shibir within two days, said sources.

According to meeting sources, some members of the 14-party combine said the government should not lift the ongoing curfew until the situation is normal again, and suggested the armed forces remain deployed for at least another month, even if the curfew is lifted.

Earlier on July 20, the government, on the alliance's recommendation, imposed the nationwide curfew and deployed armed forces to assist the civil administration in ensuring national security and protecting lives and properties following the unrest centring the quota reform movement.

JP General Secretary Sheikh Shahidul Islam yesterday urged the government to reopen educational institutions in phases, adding that the ongoing HSC examinations should be completed as soon as possible, meeting sources said.

Meanwhile, Rashed Khan Menon and Hasanul Haque Inu said the ruling party and the government high-ups should be careful while making public statements.

They mentioned Obaidul Quader's statement on Sunday that there was “a conspiracy to occupy the Gono Bhaban in a manner similar to the events in Sri Lanka, had the curfew not been imposed”.

They opined that such remarks may erode people's confidence in

the government. The prime minister endorsed their opinion.

Quader, who was at the meeting, claimed he did not say it in that manner and the media misquoted him.

Inu then said, “Sometimes a bishop, a knight, and even the queen has to be sacrificed to protect the king.”

Referring to a photo of the six detained protest organisers eating at the DB office, Menon said such activities by a government official carries a wrong message to the people, and that a political crisis should be dealt with by the politicians.

People do not trust political solutions given by bureaucrats, and the statement made by the protesters from the DB office is nothing but a mockery, meeting sources quoted him as saying.

To this, the PM said she will take care of Additional Commissioner (DB) of DMP Harun Or Rashid, who is also at the helm of the Detective Branch.

Earlier at the meeting, Hasina said her government will not spare anyone involved in the mayhem centring the quota reform movement.

She asked the home minister to nab all those responsible for the vandalism.

She also directed him not to consider any criminal as a “protester”.

Hasina asked the law minister to ensure that none of those arrested over vandalism can escape through “loopholes in the law”.

to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly,” reads the statement.

“The authorities must ensure that any arrests comply with due process safeguards and are fully in accordance with international human rights law and standards, including but not limited to the right to a free and fair trial, the right to be informed of the reasons for arrest

and the place of detention, and the right to be brought promptly before a judge, and to have access both to legal counsel and to their family.

“The authorities should ensure that peaceful activists are not prosecuted on trumped-up charges as punishment for participating in protests. Peaceful protest is not a crime, and this witch-hunt must end,” said the rights body.

End mass arrests, arbitrary detention

FROM PAGE 1

protesters is a witch-hunt by the authorities to silence anyone who dares to challenge the government

and is a tool to further perpetuate a climate of fear. Reports suggest that these arrests are entirely politically motivated, in retaliation for the exercise of human rights. It is essential that the Bangladeshi authorities respect people's rights