

JCD leader along with 33 others arrested

Pre-dawn swoop on six DU halls: Big haul of arms

Staff Reporter

Police arrested Golam Faruq Ovi, International Affairs Secretary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, along with 33 others, in a pre-dawn swoop on six halls of residence of the Dhaka University yesterday and seized a large quantity of illegal arms and ammunition.

It was the end of a long road for Ovi, sought by police, when he was hauled out of the dining room of Mohsin Hall, sharing a floor mat with the mess-boys and cooks at four a.m., as the police assisted by BDR and plainclothes from the Special Branch raided the campus.

But the operation, described by a Press Information Department release as storming of the halls, joined by 1300 law enforcement agency men, yielded six sawn-off rifles, a sub-machine gun and a sub-machine carbine, a 7 mm rifle, a shot gun, a revolver and a pistol, two walkie-talkies along with ammunition and machetes. But another wanted person, Elias Ali, leader of Ovi's rival group in JCD, who was expelled from the Dhaka University in July 1987 on charges of rioting that had left three people killed, managed to escape the dragnet. The raid followed gunbattle between the followers of the two early Monday, after a similar fight erupted on September 5, which rocked the campus creating panic among the students and members of the faculties.

The gunfights that terrified the residents in the university as well as the neighbourhoods and the brief shooting spree Tuesday noon on the campus when rival factions of the JSD (Inu) backed Chhatra League flexed their muscles, prompted the authorities to launch the operation following requests from the Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Abdul Mannan.

Earlier, he had urged all political parties, especially BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia, to withdraw their gunmen off the campus. As BDR laid a siege around the halls, police and plainclothes knocked at marked rooms and conducted the search which ended at 6.30 a.m.

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Arms recovered from different halls of Dhaka University in a pre-dawn raid yesterday.

New Nation photo

Swoop on DU Halls

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Police hauled 76 people and after screening arrested 34. Although the PID did not identify them, other than Golam Faruq Ovi, police sources said that most belonged to JCD. Some of the detainees included outsiders. After screening, 42 were let off.

Police sources said that the swoop had resulted in recovery of two sawn-off rifles, two pipe guns and one pistol from Jasimuddin Hall besides detention of 18 people. The yield from Mohsin Hall, known as the bastion of Ovi's group, included one 7 mm rifle, one SMG and a machine carbine, two sawn-off rifles and a shot gun. A foreign made revolver was found in possession of Ovi at the Mohsin Hall.

But the raid at Zia Hall, the fortress of Elias Ali's group, produced only some ammunition and assorted knives and machetes, but no guns. Five people whose identity was not given were taken into custody from Zia Hall. Surya Sen Hall and Mujib Hall raids produced one each, toy pistol. Two outsiders and five others respectively were taken into custody from these two halls.

The police net had failed to produce anything from the Zahirul Huq Hall other than two outsiders.

The list of ammunition includes 213 rounds of rifle ammunition, 47 rounds of SMG, 45 cartridges of shotgun, 43 rounds of self-loaded rifle, a number of machetes, choppers, iron rods, knives and chains.

Newsmen who visited the Police Control Room where the recovered weaponry were stacked for a preview of the Home Minister, the Home Secretary, IGP and other senior officials, reported that some of the arms were stained with rust.

The PID Press release said that Ovi was found in possession of a loaded foreign-made revolver and a cash of Taka 64,900. He is an accused in a number of cases, including the murder of Bazlur Rahman Khan, alias Pagla Shahid, an expelled student and a fellow JCD leader. He was found shot dead at a room in Mohsin Hall in early March.

Hours after police withdrew from the inner campus, supporters of Elias Ali allegedly stabbed three supporters of Ovi's faction of JCD and beat two others. Elias Ali, Assistant International Affairs Secretary of JCD, and Fazlul Huq Milon, Publication and Publicity Secretary of JCD, addressed supporters of JCD at Madhu's Canteen, three hours after the raid. Elias Ali condemned the police raid terming it as a violation of the autonomy of Dhaka University. I shall shed my last drop of blood to keep the campus free from terror, Ali declared. In his brief speech. No other reaction on the arrest came from him or other JCD leaders.

Ovi, in his early twenties, is the scion of an educated family. Three of his elder brothers are teachers of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University and Rajshahi University. One of his sisters has recently joined Dhaka University as a teacher.

A native of Barisal, Golam Faruq Ovi had been well placed in merit lists of SSC and HSC examinations. He had been a student of honours final year in Sociology when he was expelled from the Dhaka University along with 11 others. Of the 12, nine belonged to JCD. The others belonged to BCL (M-N).

During a visit to the Police Control Room, Home Minister Maj Gen (rtd) Mahmudul Hasan expressed his satisfaction over the seizure of large number of illegal arms and ammunition. He expressed the hope that following recovery of such illegal arms and ammunition, law and order would be maintained on the Dhaka University campus and a congenial atmosphere for education would return.

The Home Minister further said that the government would continue its drive to seize illegal arms to ensure peace and security of citizens.

The minister also welcomed the officers and members of the law enforcing agencies who took part in the Dhaka University raid.