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DU VIOLENCE 2007 JS body sees govt agencies' instigation

Asks for dropping 10 pending cases
against teachers, students

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Several government agencies were involved in instigating and fuelling the August 2007 violence on Dhaka University campus involving army personnel and students during the last caretaker regime, observed a parliamentary committee yesterday.

The parliamentary standing committee on education which is probing the incident also said the immediate past caretaker government cannot deny its responsibility for the incident, as several civilian and army officials of the then administration were involved in it.

The House committee also asked the authority concerned to withdraw 10 pending cases filed against DU teachers and

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students in connection with the unrest.

It termed the judicial probe report about the incident that had been submitted to the caretaker government as 'one-sided and incomplete', saying that the one-member probe committee's report dealt with peripheral matters, instead of finding out the causes and the persons responsible for the violence. Retired Justice of the Supreme Court Habibur Rahman was the investigator.

"We want to let the nation know the facts about the August 2007 violence on Dhaka University campus, and also want to identify the persons responsible for the despicable incident," Rashed Khan Menon, chief of the parliamentary committee told reporters after its meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"Different government agencies were involved in instigating and fuelling the violence, and the campus was

turned into a centre of repression," Menon, also the president of Workers Party, said.

On August 2 this year, the House committee decided to investigate the incident.

It also asked the home ministry for a dossier of intelligence reports on the unrest that broke out on August 20, 2007.

Briefing reporters at Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre, Menon told reporters that the committee already started investigating the incident after getting legal advice from the law ministry.

The committee also asked the information ministry to collect all news clippings, photographs, video footage, and news scripts of BBC about the incident, and to submit those to it.

Criticising the judicial probe report, Menon said, "The one-member probe body didn't go deep into the incident. It rather dealt with peripheral issues. Therefore

the report is one-sided and incomplete."

On withdrawing the pending cases, Menon said the committee asked the home ministry to withdraw the remaining cases in connection with the August campus violence through a government executive order.

"We don't want those cases to be withdrawn like those that were scrapped under political consideration," he added.

"We've also asked the home ministry to withdraw the other cases in connection with the subsequent flare-ups in educational institutions in other parts of the country," he said.

Thousands of DU students took to the streets to protest beating of three fellow students and insult of a teacher by some army men on August 20, 2007 at the university gymnasium field during a football match.

They staged fierce demon-

strations demanding withdrawal of an army camp that was stationed on the campus back then, and also an apology from the troops.

Subsequent pitched battles between the demonstrating students and police for the next two days left over 250 people injured, most of whom were also students.

On August 21, the government ordered withdrawal of the army camp from the campus and a judicial probe into the violence.

But the violence already spread to other educational institutions in the capital and elsewhere, prompting the erstwhile government to impose curfews on divisional headquarters on August 22, shutting down universities and colleges.

Security personnel on August 24 picked up five teachers -- two from DU and three from Rajshahi University -- and took them to unspecified places for interrogation.