

Police beat journalists covering polytech students rally

9 policemen suspended,
AC closed

Staff Correspondent

NINE policemen were suspended and a senior assistant commissioner was closed to the DMP headquarters hours after they had attacked three photojournalists and a contributor to a Bangla daily.

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newspaper at Agargaon in the capital on Saturday when they went there to cover demonstrations Dhaka Women Polytechnic Institute students went on.

The three Prothom Alo photojournalists — Jahidul Karim Selim, Khaled Sarkar and Sajid Hossain — were sent to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation. The feature page contributor Imam Hasan was given first-aid treatment, their colleagues said.

Witnesses said that the police did not charge with truncheons at the students on demonstrations blocking Rokeya Sarani but attacked the journalists who were taking snaps.

Md Shahidul Islam, senior assistant commissioner of the Tejgaon police zone, was closed to the DMP headquarters, the Tejgaon police division's deputy commissioner Imam Hossain told New Age.

Subinspector Zahirul Islam, assistant subinspectors Safiuddin and Nazmul

Alam, constables Motiur, Razak, Shahjahan, Joynal, Ratan and Jahangir were suspended, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police said.

DMP additional deputy commissioner (media and community service) Md Masudur Rahman told New Age, 'We have taken the decision after establishing that they policemen were responsible for the incident... Others may be suspended if they are found guilty.'

The authorities, meanwhile, set up a committee, led by joint commissioner (headquarters) Shabuddin Koreshi, to investigate the incident and the committee was asked to submit the report in seven days, he said.

The home minister, Sahara Khatun, in April asked law enforcers to ensure the safety of journalists carrying their professional duties and stop repression on them.

The injured Sajid Hossain said that he had reached the area where the students blocked the road about

12:30am.

He said that a policeman had misbehaved with him after had he used wrong lane of the road to reach the place and it had led to an altercation with other policemen there.

'Shahidul asked his force to beat up Sajid,' said the injured Jahidul Karim, who also went there.

'As I requested the policemen not to beat Sajid, they started beating me and tore my dress,' said Jahidul.

The police then started beating the two while Khaled was trying to take snaps of the police attack.

The police then attacked Khaled, who also went to the place to cover the incident.

The police also attacked the feature contributor Imam Hasan and took away the memory card of this mobile which which he had recorded the incident.

The police seized their cameras and mobiles but returned them after it had triggered protests by journalists.

Jahidul said, 'The police-

men then dragged us like criminals to the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police station.'

The Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police officer-in-charge, Jakir Hossain Mollah, told New Age that he had gone to the station house after coming to know of the incident and sent the injured to NITOR.

The injured photojournalists were moved to the Triama Centre at Shaymoli in the evening.

The assistant commissioner, Shahidul Islam, however, in the afternoon claimed that there were 'scuffles' between the journalists and the police during the demonstrations. 'I asked the journalists not to take photographs but they continued... I was in a temper.'

No case or general diary was lodged in connection with the incident.

Several socio-cultural, rights and professional groups, including the Bangladesh Photojournalists' Association, protested at the police attack and demanded punishment of the policemen responsible.