

DU authorities blame police for failure to arrest sexual assaulters

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THE Dhaka University in a probe report submitted to the High Court has blamed the police for incident of sexual assault of Pahela Boishakh celebrators on the campus on April 14.

The report also criticised the police for not arresting the perpetrators whose photographs had appeared in different social and mass media immediately after the incident.

Continued on page 2 Col: 1

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Continued from page 1

'People do not know whether or not the police are trying to arrest the perpetrators, and that is why they losing confidence in the police,' said the report of the five-member sexual harassment complaint committee in its 10-point findings.

A bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman is scheduled for today for the hearing on the report submitted to it on June 30 complying with the ruling it issued suo moto April 16.

On May 19, the same bench asked the police to take prompt action against eight people who were identified by the police through video footage.

The bench had passed the order after the inspector of police and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner in separate reports said that the police were trying to arrest the perpetrators and declared bounty on each of the eight for information about their whereabouts.

The university probe committee said that the university administration and the police at a meeting the day before the Pahela

Baishakh had given some directives on the police administration.

'The committee thought that such incident took place as the police administration had not acted as per the directions of the university administration,' said the report.

It said that it was a planned act of an organised group as per video footage of the closed-circuit television cameras and statements of the witnesses.

It said that a perverted quarter organised in various group had committed the offence.

There were understandings among the perpetrator. Photographs of some suspects were annexed in the report although their identity could not be established, said the committee.

It said that the police should have arrested of those whose photographs had appeared in different social and mass media immediately after the incident.

'The Dhaka University authorities have been unnecessarily blamed,' said committee.

The probe committee blamed the university proctor for failure to understand importance of

incident although he had monitored the celebrations before the incident.

It said that the proctor did not visit the spot although he sent a proctoral mobile team and arranged deployment of additional police.

'It was the duty of the law-enforcement agencies to maintain law and order during such celebrations,' said the committee.

It is evident that both the victims and perpetrators were outsiders, said the committee.

'It was not possible for the witnesses to identify the perpetrators,' said the committee.

It said that the deputy commissioner (Ramna), who was posted on the campus, was not experienced enough for which he could not take right decision in right time.

It said that there was nobody to monitor the 19 CCTV cameras.

The committee said that Shahbagh police station had controlled the three gates of Suhrawardy ud-dyan facing the campus.

It said that the incident took place during Magrib prayer. The police were first seen trying to disperse the huge gathering at the

gate near TSC charging batons.

Additional police forces were deployed after 7:00pm, long after the incident, the committee said, adding that the police force were increased probably after the proctor asked to do so.

It said that video footage showed presence of a plain-clothes police, who was identified as Saidul Haq Bhuiyan, who freed one of the perpetrators from the spot at about 7:06pm.

The committee made eight recommendations to prevent recurrence of such incident. The recommendations include immediate arrest of the perpetrators identifying them from video footage, formation of separate celebration committees in consultation with the university each year, deployment of additional police forces from 6:00am to 9:00pm on Pahela Baisakha and keeping a striking force reserved at the Shahbagh police station, prohibition of entrance of vehicles carrying advertisements of different companies, no installation of shops and consultation with leaders of different students organisations before the celebration.