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10 minutes cost boy's life

STAFFREPORTER

Calcutta, Aug. 23: When 17-year-old Arun Kumar Chahani found the gate of his school closed, he shut life — his own — out.

Yesterday, Arun had left his home on Brahma Samaj Road at Behala, chirpy as any young boy starting his day. This morning was more special than others, though, for the quiz whiz.

An above-average student hooked to quizzing, Arun was to meet a board of experts who had flown down from Chennai to interview and select participants for an all-India meet in the Tamil Nadu capital. "He was brimming with confidence when he left home," his aunt, Gayetri Agarwal, said today.

Arun reached Vivekananda Mission School at 11.25 am, 10 minutes after the gate had been shut to students. Gatekeeper Ranjan Giri, citing school regulations, refused to allow him in.

Denied entry, he returned home to take his life a few hours later. The Class-XII student ate little through the day, saying he was not feeling well, and retired to his room for the night.

This morning, the family found his body — a saree tied around the neck — hanging from the ceiling.

"The shock of being denied entry, something that happened

very rarely, if at all, and an opportunity missed must have led him to take the extreme step," his aunt said.

Family members recalled that Arun had done quite well in the written round of the competition and was among the few students called for the interview to be taken by the team of experts. The final round of the all-India meet is supposed to take place in Chennai "very soon", Behala police said later.

"He was sure he would make it to Chennai," his aunt added. She said Arun was very sentimental and could not tolerate any kind of humiliation.

Classes XI and XII of Vivekananda Mission School remained suspended today to mourn Arun's death. But neither the principal of the school nor any teacher was available for comment. The gatekeeper was around, aware of what had happened but a helpless prisoner to regulations.

"We have been told to be very strict on punctuality," Giri said. "No student is supposed to be let in after 11.15 am and I was just following the rule-book," he said.

Had he known Arun was not like any other student, he might have acted differently. That is a thought unlikely to leave Giri in a hurry.

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