

DEMAND FOR HALL

Jagannath students stage rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitating students of Jagannath University (JnU) yesterday announced that they would stage a two-day sit-in from tomorrow on their campus to press home their demand for residential halls on the land of Dhaka Central Jail.

Along with their class boycott programme, they called for the sit-in during a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Holding placards, several thousand students of JnU and other educational institutions joined the two-hour-long programme that began around 3:00pm. Students and teachers of the institutions expressed their solidarity with the movement.

"Apart from our ongoing boycott of class and examinations, we will hold the sit-in on Sunday and Monday," Mahidul Islam, a student of the university, said at the rally.

He also said they would continue their movement until their demand is met.

Eminent personalities also joined the rally.

Barrister Jyotirmoy Barua, Dhaka University teacher Robaet Ferdous and

Gonojagoron Mancha spokesperson Imran H Sarker, among others, expressed solidarity with the students.

"Authorities have to answer why the students, who are supposed to be busy with their studies, have taken to the streets," Jyotirmoy said.

The protesters should not be divided over their political beliefs, he added.

Imran H Sarker called upon the students to continue the protest.

"It does no matter where and how the dormitories will be built. Fact is that the students badly need dormitories, and the authorities have to ensure them," he said.

The students began their demonstration on August 2 for new halls to be built at the spot where the Dhaka Central Jail was previously situated on Nazimuddin Road in old Dhaka.

On July 29, all the inmates of the jail were shifted to the newly-built central jail in Keraniganj.

Authorities are now planning to set up a training institute, a park and a museum on the premises of the 200-year-old Dhaka jail.

The protesters said many of their existing halls are occupied.

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Earlier, the students held several processions inside the campus before finally proceeding to padlock the new administrative building of the university.

On August 17, the students staged a sit-in in front of the Jatiya Press Club after their attempts to lay siege to the education ministry was foiled by police. They observed strike the next day.

The students tried to march on the Prime Minister's Office on Monday. But they were barred at Bangshal from where they declared that they would abstain from attending classes for next two days.

On Wednesday, they blocked the Paltan intersection, voicing the demand.

Currently, around 21,000 students are studying at JnU.