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Dhaka University closed sine die: Press Note

One person killed, 50 policemen injured

The Bangladesh Government last evening announced a series of measures to halt growing and calculated student violence aimed at disrupting peace and tranquility in Dhaka, adversely affecting the normal life of the peace-loving people, according to a Press Note issued on Monday night.

Following a day of provocative acts of violence by students in Dhaka, the Government announced the following measures:-

(1) Dhaka University has been closed sine die with immediate effect. All Residential Halls are to be vacated by students by

9 a.m. tomorrow.

(2) The orders relating to the prohibition of meetings, processions, assembly and strikes are to be strictly enforced.

(3) Curfew hours in the Dhaka University area will be from 6 p.m. to 5 a.m. and in the rest of Dhaka Metropolitan Area curfew will be effective from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m.

The announcement mentioned the events leading upto violence in the vicinity of the Bangladeshi Secretariat. The so-called students Action Committee, a conglomeration of student wings of 14 Political Parties had announced that they would besiege the Secretariat in protest against government policies.

At 11 a.m. they gathered in the premises of the Dhaka University and speakers made inflammatory speeches, in defiance of Martial Law, urging the students to take the law in their own hands. On the instigation of these professional agitators,

misnamed as students leaders, the students came out in a procession, which again is prohibited by Martial Law. Raising slogans against the Government they approached the Secretariat in a body and were stopped by the police near the Old High Court-Curzon Hall Junction. Thereupon the unruly crowd started heavy brickbattling of the police on duty and tried to break through the police cordon.

The police, who were only armed with truncheons and cane

shields, were in danger of being overwhelmed by sheer numbers and resorted to using waterhoses to disperse the crowd.

When that failed, the police resorted to tear gassing and dispersed the crowd which then split into various apparently well organised and ably-led groups who made their way in to the Old High Court, the Curzon Hall (part of the University), the Press Club and the Shishu (Children's) Academy. At Shishu Academy a few hundred students beat up young children and the police. After 15 minutes they regrouped and resumed their violent attacks, coming in wave upon wave at the police party. They set two parked cars on fire, smashed windows and glass panes of nearby Government buildings, set a Government office on fire, damaged light and electric poles, road island decorations and uprooted road-side iron railings.

Police again had to resort to lathi charge and dispersed the violent crowd of students. One group of demonstrators tried to cross to the old town near the Old Fulbaria Railway Station but were stopped near the Railway Hospital and turned back. Thereupon more Government property was damaged, including the burning of seven motor vehicles mostly buses.

It may be mentioned that the police exercised the utmost restraint and had to exercise the right of self-defence in the face

of extreme provocation.

The students attacked and gouged out the eyes of a policeman and injured about 50 others with brickbats, iron rods and bamboo staff. In the melee unfortunately one person received a serious knife injury and later succumbed in hospital. He was identified as Zainul Abedin, son of Mozaffar Chowdhury of South Delai P.S. Chatkhil who read upto class six was a worker in an electric shop.

The Chief Martial Law Administrator this afternoon paid a visit to the injured in hospital who include both students and policemen.

The Government announcement said there appeared to be an organised plan of wilful violence hatched by political elements, on the pretext of opposing the Government's policies which left a trail of violence in recent weeks in Dhaka.

It pointed to the political complicity by citing the presence of some well-known political leaders at the student's meeting organised the afternoon in the University campus.