

Sporadic incidents in city Students observe gherao programme

Staff Correspondent

Pitched battles with exchange of gun shots and bomb explosions between the students and the supporters of the ruling Jatiya Party disrupted the city life during the 'gherao' programme of the residences of ministers on Saturday by the All-Party Students Unity (APSU).

The angry students set fire to five vehicles and three motorbikes of police, damaged the police box near the Science Laboratory Crossing and a BRTC double decker bus in front of New Market and ransacked 'Sicily' a Chinese restaurant near Jonaki Cinema Hall during their sporadic clashes with the police and Jatiya Party workers on the day. The students also stormed and destroyed a dias erected by the ruling party backed Bank Employees Federation in front of Sheraton Hotel.

The ruling Jatiya Party and its front organisations organised nine rallies and erected daises blocking the roads at Kakrail, Shahbagh, Moghbazar, Siddeswari and Mouchak areas as part of their programme to resist the gherao of ministers' residences by APSU. President Ershad addressed two ral-

lies at Kakrail and Mouchak while Vice-President Moudud Ahmed, Prime Minister Kazi Zafar Ahmed and other cabinet members addressed other rallies of the party held under police security ring.

Mintoo Road, Hare Road and Park avenue where the residences of ministers are located was the target of the students. Police cordoned the entire area and restricted the entry of outsiders since early morning. Even the morning walkers were not allowed inside the Ramna Park as part of security measures in the wake of the

students' programme. The entire area gave desolate look from the morning till afternoon and the ministers drove to their offices under heavy police protection.

The trouble originated when a big procession of the APSU led by Chhatra League President Habibur Rahman Habib and DUCSU leaders came out from the Dhaka University campus and proceeded towards Bangla Motor. They crossed the police barricade near PG Hospital and at 11.30 a.m. stormed the dias of Bank Federation in front of Sheraton Hotel. The leaders of the Federation including its President Mr. Jamaluddin Ahmed ran away for safe shelter when the students damaged the dias and tried to set it on fire. Police intervened and chased the students for about an hour pitched battle continued between the students and the police. A number of bombs exploded in the area and police fired tear gas shells to disperse the students.

The students spread to Paribagh, Shahbagh, Science Laboratory, New Market, Elephant Road, Bangla Motor and Topkhana areas. They tried to storm the residence of the Irrigation Minister at Pafibagh.

Around 1 p.m. the National Press Club area turned into a battle ground when the students and Jatiya Party supporters staged chased and counter chase. The ruling party's youth front Jatiya Jubo Sanghati supporters held a rally in front of the Press Club. Vice

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President Moudud Ahmed, Deputy Prime Minister Shah Moazzem Hossain, Environment Minister Jafar Imam and T&T Minister Kazi Firoz Rashid addressed the rally. When Mr. Zafar Imam and Kazi Firoz Rashid and other Jubo Sanghati leaders were on their way to leave the meeting place with their jeeps and micro buses as a procession of the students appeared near the Education Bhaban. Bombs exploded near the Foreign Office and the ministers with their supporters ran for safety towards the Secretariat. The Jubo Sanghati supporters chased the students with open arms and brandishing hockey sticks and iron rods. They fired pistol shots. Some of the Jubo Sanghati activists went inside the Press Club premises with pistols in their hands when the students chased them. At least fifty rounds of gunshots were fired by the Jubo Sanghati supporters when the students replied exploding bombs. After about half an hour Mr. Zafar Imam and Kazi Firoz Rashid drove from the secretariat with heavy police escort with their supports in a number of jeeps and micro buses.

Later the students held a rally in front of the Press Club. The APSU leaders declared that the ministers and ruling party MPs would not be allowed to come out and their vehicles would be chased.

The student leaders termed the rally as their victory meeting following what they considered successful gherao programme of the ministers' residence. They said that the activities of the Jatiya Party "mastans" with their open arms proved that how much panic the gherao programme created in the ruling party circle.

Meanwhile, the mainstream opposition parties and alliances issued statements condemning the armed hooliganism of the Jatiya Party mastans. They warned the government against the consequences of using arms by what they said private force of the ruling party.