

50 injured, dormitories vacated

RU closed sine die following students, outsiders clash

RAJSHAHI, Aug 20—Rajshahi University was closed sine die on Wednesday morning following overnight clashes between students and local businessmen in Binodpur Bazar beside the varsity campus that left over 50 people wounded, including students, police and journalists, reports UNB.

The university authorities also asked the residential students to vacate all the dormitories by 12 noon today to avert further outbreaks of violence.

And the students complied with the strict orders by the deadline set by the university syndicate. The RU policymaking body took the decision in an emergency meeting in the morning with acting Vice-chancellor Prof. Maunul

Keramat in the chair.

"Hearing about the syndicate decision, students started vacating the halls and messes well before the deadline. They streamed out towards the city and bus terminals and rail-stations to catch the first transport available," says a spot report on the campus shutdown.

Campus sources said supervisor of a bus of Hanif Paribahan took Tk 300 from Humayun, a 2nd-semester student of Management Department of the university, as ticket fare for his travel to Gazipur on Tuesday afternoon assuring him a seat. The supervisor didn't give him any ticket nor provided with any seat while he started the journey.

The supervisor assured managing seat for him from Natore.

But at one stage the supervisor forced Humayun to get down from the bus, without returning him the money, following a quarrel with him over managing the seat.

Humayun went back to the campus instead of moving to Gazipur, and narrated the episode of humiliation to the general students.

Hundreds angry students later rushed out and put barricades on the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway at Binodpur Bazar on Tuesday evening.

The blockade coupled with demonstrations continued from 7 pm to 10 pm. The melee brought traffic on the busy route to a total halt for three hours, with hundreds of vehicles stranded on both sides.

Later, a clash broke out between the RU students and local businessmen on the RU campus and its neighborhoods after several students beat up a staff member of Hanif Enterprise, Kanak, at Binodpur Bazar at about 8pm.

The students snatched away the camera of Azharuddin, photo-journalist of the daily Prothom Alo, while he was taking snaps of their demonstrations amid the widespread clash. They also physically assaulted him.

The university authority shut the Binodpur gate about 10 pm when the students took position inside during the pitched battles. But the students pelted the businessmen with bricks from inside, witnesses said.

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RU closed

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"At one stage, the students broke open the door at about 11 pm and attacked the businessmen, which triggered a fierce fighting," says the spot report.

The businessmen backed by local people, in turn, chased the students back into the campus by hurling bottles, rods, sticks and other sharp weapons available nearhand.

Police fired 10 teargas shells and two bullets to get to grips with the situation amid the nighttime Armageddon.

Over 50 people, including two police constables, 40 RU students and seven local people were injured during the clashes. The injured students were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The students later laid a siege to VC's residence at about 1 am. They withdrew at about 1.45 am after negotiation with proctor Enamul Haq, other members of proctorial body, police and BDR personnel.

Meanwhile, businessmen held a meeting at about 10 am today in protest against the incident. The newly elected Mayor of Rajshahi, AHM Khairuzzaman Lion, was present at the meeting.

The mayor-elect blamed "weak administration" for the incident. He also blamed members of a student organization for their "ill attempt to make the campus volatile".