

SSMC closed after BCL infighting

Seven injured in violent clashes

Mohiuddin Alamgir and Mohibub Zaman

SIR Salimullah Medical College was closed on Saturday for an indefinite period after violent clashes between rival factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League, the ruling party-backed student organisation.

The authorities made the decision after an academic council meeting on Saturday morning and asked the students vacate the halls by 4:00pm.

The clashes broke out between the two factions over establishing dominance over the campus and allocation of seats to the freshers.

Students of the college said the fighting had begun at the Main Students Hall of Salimullah Medical College early Saturday and continued for two hours leaving seven students injured, two of them were stated to be in a critical condition.

The injured are Saiful Islam, Mashur Rahman,

Azgar Ali, Ashiqur Rahman Raju and three others. Mashur Rahman was shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital after his condition deteriorated.

Students said that a group of BCL activists led by Mohammad Javed, known as Leo Group on the campus, had attacked activists of their

rival Ataul Karim group, also known as Sandhani group, and vandalised 33 rooms of the Main Students Hall in the early hours of Saturday.

In retaliation, Sandhani group vandalised Leo Club on the college premises in the morning.

They said that rivalries

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between the two groups intensified over the last couple of days over allocation of seats to the freshers at the residential halls.

Salimullah Medical College principal professor MA Azhar told New Age that the academic council of the college had decided that all classes would remain suspended for an indefinite period and asked students to vacate the halls of residence by 4:00pm.

He said examinations would be held as scheduled and examinees of second and fourth year professional examinations would be allowed to stay in the halls by showing their admit cards.

Azhar said that violent clashes between two groups of students had forced the authorities to close the college.

The academic committee had also formed a three-member committee headed by the college's paediatric department professor Lutfal Kabir to probe the incidents. The committee has been asked to submit its findings in three days.

Kotwali police officer-in-charge Mohammad Salaud-

din said the clashes had taken place between 1:30am and 3:00am at the dormitory on Old Dhaka's Mitford Road.

'The violence resulted from rivalries between two factions of Chhatra League. We came to know that one faction had attacked the hall breaking open the main entrance,' he added.

Kotwali police detained 57 students from the hall but released them in the evening.

Sandhani group brought out a procession on the campus in the morning protesting at the violence.

General students also protested at the violence and closure of the college.

A large contingent of police backed by the Rapid Action Battalion was deployed on the campus.

Farzana Akhtar, a final year student, was critical of such violence for dominance of the campus and feared that suspension of classes would trigger session jam and prolong their academic life.

Noman Ahmed, a third year student, demanded resumption of classes as soon as possible.

In another clash on the

day, 15 students were injured between rival groups of BCL at Dhaka Dental College.

Chhatra League general secretary Siddiqui Nazmul Alam told New Age that a three-member committee led by the organisation's vice-president Chandra Shekhar Halder had visited Sir Salimullah Medical College after hearing the news. Stern action would be taken against the persons found responsible, he said.

Violence on campuses flared up at regular intervals across the country over last several months badly affecting academic atmosphere and forcing general students to bear the brunt.

In most of the cases, BCL was responsible for the trouble with rival factions engaging in violent clashes over establishing dominance over the campuses. Bloody clashes involving Chhatra League, Bangladesh Nationalist Party-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Jamaat-e-Islami-backed Islamic Chhatra Shibir and some other student organisations over past months resulted in the killing of a number of students.

During last two months academic activities at a

number of educational institutions, including Chittagong University, Jahangirnagar University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Comilla University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology and Khulna University of Engineering and Technology, remained suspended for days or even weeks because of student violence.

Chittagong University authorities suspended all classes and examinations until February 16 after the violence and asked students to vacate the halls of residence, following bloody clashes between Chhatra League and Chhatra Shibir on the campus on Wednesday which resulted in killing of two students-- Mujahidul Islam of zoology and Mashud bin Habib, of English department.

Academic activities remained suspended at Khulna University of Engineering and Technology since January 2 with suspension of classes for an indefinite period after BCL activists attacked general students protesting at supply of sub-standard food at an annual feast.