

POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS' DEMANDS

Demo stopped after govt assurance

Vandalism, clashes continue

STAR REPORT

Students of polytechnic institutes yesterday afternoon postponed their countrywide demonstrations for 15 days after receiving assurances from the government of meeting their demands.

They will take their final exams, which they had boycotted on Sunday, if the authorities concerned within the next two days set free their fellow students detained by the law enforcers during the countrywide demonstrations.

The decisions came after several govern-

ment high officials, including the education secretary, held a meeting with the leaders of the agitating students and several organisations of diploma engineers at the education ministry.

Meanwhile, 75 more people, including policemen and journalists, were injured and many vehicles vandalised in Rajshahi, Bogra, Sylhet, Khulna and Feni as the students staged violent demonstrations yesterday demanding timely promotions in jobs and withdrawal of the entry-level position (supervisor) introduced for diploma engineers in 2008.

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Khondoker Mainur Rahman, member secretary of the Diploma Engineers' Parishad, said the meeting decided to increase diploma engineers' quota to 50 percent from the existing 33 percent for promotion to the post of assistant engineer from sub-assistant engineer.

Besides, the meeting agreed to drop the post of "supervisor", the entry-level position held by diploma engineers. From now on, the position will be "sub-assistant engineer", he added.

Regarding the postponement of demonstrations for 15 days, Mainur said, "We gave the authorities 15 days to meet the assurances made by them in the meeting."

Talking to The Daily Star, Education Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser said the meeting discussed the demands of the students and diploma engineers.

"Actually, there is no post of supervisor for diploma engineers, but there is some confusion about it," he mentioned.

STUDENTS GO BERSERK
During yesterday's demonstrations by polytechnic students, an OC of Detective Branch (DB) of police suffered bullet wounds in Rajshahi.

The aggrieved students, who have been demonstrating since September 22, also blocked different roads and highways across the country yesterday.

At least 35 crude bombs went off across the country. Law enforcers rounded up at least 35 people in this connection.

RAJSHAHI
Witnesses said violence ensued around 11:30am when students tried to block the Rajshahi-Naogaon highway. The protesters torched a police motorbike in front of Rajshahi Polytechnic Institute in the

city. Facing resistance from police, the students returned to their campus and started hurling crude bombs and brickbats at the law enforcers.

At least 30 homemade bombs went off during the one-hour clash, leaving six policemen, including the OC of DB, injured, said Ziaur Rahman, OC of Boalia Police Station.

Later, police and Rapid Action Battalion personnel entered the campus and charged batons, leaving at least 45 people injured.

The law enforcers fired over 100 rubber bullets and lobbed at least 40 teargas canisters to bring the situation under control around 12:30pm.

BOGRA
Police fired three rubber bullets to disperse the agitating students as they blocked the Sherpur road in front of Borga Polytechnic Institute and vandalised several

vehicles around 9:30am.
SYLHET
Students of Sylhet Polytechnic Institute vandalised seven vehicles at in the city's Khojarkhola.

Later, police reached the spot and got the situation under control.

Protesting the vandalism, transport workers in Sylhet blocked the Dhaka-Sylhet highway by parking buses and trucks on the road around 2:00pm.

Police later removed the barricade around 4:45pm.

KHULNA
At least 10 people, including two primary school students, were injured when the students of several polytechnic institutes vandalised at least 10 vehicles on Dhaka-Khulna highway near Khulna city around 11:00am.

FENI
At least 15 people, including four policemen and two journalists, were injured as the students of Feni

Polytechnic Institute clashed with law enforcers in the town.

The agitating students also vandalised several vehicles and blasted at least five crude bombs during the clash that continued for more than one hour from 10:30am, said Abul Kalam Azad, inspector (investigation) of Sadar Model Police Station.

The injured policemen and newsmen were admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital.

BHOLA
The agitating students of Bhola Polytechnic Institute blocked the Bhola-Charfassion highway in Borhanuddin upazila around 10:00am. Police removed the barricade around 1:00pm.

Students also staged protests in Kurigram, Patuakhali and Tangail.

(Our correspondents in Rajshahi, Bogra, Sylhet, Khulna, Feni and Bhola contributed to this report)