

Polytechnic students go on rampage

Smash dozens of vehicles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Polytechnic students yesterday boycotted the first day of their final exams all over the country and went on a rampage, leaving around 250 injured and many vehicles vandalised.

The agitating students were pressing home their two-point demand -- ensuring timely promotion in jobs and withdrawal of the 2008 government provision that classifies entry-level positions held by diploma engineers as "supervisors".

Police arrested 76 students from different places of the country, according to our district correspondents. Students, police and journalists were among the wounded.

tomorrow, and press forth their demands to the secretaries of public administration, public works, education and finance.

In the wake of the protests, Abdul Mannan Khan, state minister for the housing and public works, will sit with the president and vice-president of the Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh at 2:00pm today.

Students, teachers and diploma engineers under the banner of Bangladesh Diploma Engineer Peshajibi Chhatra Shikkhak Sangram Parishad have been demonstrating across the country for the last one week.

Talking to The Daily Star, Khondoker Mainur Rahman, member secretary of the parishad, said the students boycotted exams and staged peaceful demonstrations but police swooped on them without any provocation.

He said apart from the two-point demand, the students had a few more issues, including increasing their stipends and intern fees.

In Dhaka, demonstrations erupted in front of Tejgaon Polytechnic Institute when around 1,000 students of different institutes gathered there around 8:30am yesterday.

students go on rampage

After half an hour, a running battle began with law enforcers when the agitating students tried to block Satrasta intersection.

The students vandalised at least four vehicles on the road, said Biplob Kumar Sarker, deputy commissioner (Tejgaon division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Police fired several tear-gas shells. They foiled an attempt to block Manik Mia Avenue around 11:00am.

The agitators blocked Road 27 in Dhanmondi and vandalised 15 vehicles around 1:20pm, said Masud Karim, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station.

Students of Comilla Polytechnic Institute took to the streets in Sadar (South) upazila from 12:10noon and torched a police van and the car of the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) in Kotbari area of Sadar South upazila yesterday.

At least 22 people, including eight policemen, were injured when students with firearms, brick chips and bamboo sticks attacked the law enforcers, said witnesses and police.

Police fired 100 rubber bullets.

A group of students set fire to the land office in Bijoypur in Comilla. Another group locked up the UNO in Kotbari Tahsil Office for around three hours.

In Barisal, two passengers, a driver and a conductor were injured as students vandalised a BRTC bus in Barisal.

Activists of pro-ruling Awami League organisations Chhatra League, Jubo League and Sramik League allegedly were locked in clashes with students in Jessore while motor workers beat up three students in Thakurgaon for vandalising eight vehicles.

In Jessore, police, motor workers, Chhatra League, Jubo League and Sramik League activists swooped on demonstrating students after the students wrecked four vehicles.

Thirty people were injured as the ruling party men hacked away at and beat up students around 1:00pm. Journalists covering the incident also came under attack.

The unruly activists assaulted the principal of Jessore Polytechnic Institute in his office.

The party activists also vandalised the two polytechnic institutes and 10 student dormitories, alleged witnesses.

In Patuakhali, at least 100 people, including students, police and journalists were injured as students of Patuakhali Polytechnic Institute clashed with law enforcers on the road in

front of their campus around 9:30am.

The clash ensued when police resisted a group of polytechnic students from vandalising vehicles on the road, said Manirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Patuakhali Sadar Police Station.

The students pelted police with brick chips. In retaliation, police fired gunshots and rubber bullets in the air, lobbed teargas canisters, and arrested 12.

In Chandpur, demonstrating students clashed among themselves following an altercation about who would lead the protest, leaving 10 wounded.

In Kishoreganj, at least 30 people, including 12 policemen, were injured when students collided with police.

At least 20 people were injured, including a sub-inspector, in a clash that was triggered when police tried to remove a blockade by student on the Sirajganj-Kazipur highway while 13 policemen were hurt in a fight in Sherpur.

Reports of violence also came from Satkhira, Jhenidah, Rajshahi and Chittagong, while students in Bhola, Narshingdi, Dinajpur, Munshiganj and Moulvibazar demonstrated to press home their demand.