

JAGANNATH UNIVERSITY

Students attempt to reclaim hall; locals counter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an attempt to reclaim Ajmal Hossain Hall from "illegal occupation", students of Jagannath University (JnU) yesterday hung a banner in front of the dormitory entrance but locals tore it into pieces soon after.

As announced earlier, a few thousand protesting JnU students marched towards the "occupied" dormitory located in Old Dhaka's Patuatuli at around 11:00am.

However, police stopped them on their way under

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Students attempt

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the Banglabazar footbridge, some 100 yards from the dormitory site and allowed only 10 students to go forward, said Harun-ur-Rashid, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Lalbagh zone.

Mofijul Islam, who was one of the ten students, said as they reached Crown Market, some 20 yards away from the hall, they found that locals had locked the gate on the road leading to the dormitory and were demonstrating against them.

"Then we hung a banner beside the gate and left the place," he said.

As soon as the students left the place, the locals tore it down, witnesses said.

The JnU students have long been claiming that the hall -- currently occupied by influential locals using the name of a "martyr's family" -- and 10 other dormitories, located at different parts of the old town, had been under

the university authority's control nearly three decades ago. Later, influential locals, some with political clouts, and even police grabbed the dormitories in phases.

Yesterday's march towards Ajmal Hossain Hall was a part of a movement launched by the students on February 12 to reclaim the dormitories.

On return from the hall site, the JnU students continued their demonstrations on the campus and chanted slogans against illegal occupation.

Meanwhile, teachers of the university continued their indefinite strike in solidarity with the students' movement and also demanding removal of two police officials for an attack on agitating students and teachers on February 23 that left at least 50 people injured.

The teachers did not hold classes between 11:00am and 4:00pm, said Ali Akkas, president of JnU Teachers Association.