

JAGANNATH UNIVERSITY

Law in hands of students?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitating students of Jagannath University yesterday locked the main entrance to the Sadarghat branch of Bangladesh Bank for several hours and gave the bank authorities a three-day ultimatum to shift elsewhere.

Students gathered on the campus in the morning and locked the main entrance to the bank around 11:30am. They claimed that the bank had encroached on the university land.

Banking operations at the branch were disrupted as nobody was allowed in and out of the bank till 3:00pm.

Contacted, JnU Vice-chancellor Prof Mizanur Rahman said the bank branch, according to locals, is on a piece of land which belonged to a female dormitory of the university.

"I've sent a letter to the governor of Bangladesh Bank on Monday outlining the latest situation," he added.

Students under the banner of "Jagannath Bishwabidyalyer Bedakhal Howa Hall Uddhar Sangram Parishad" have been staging demonstrations since February 12 demanding the authorities recover 11 dormitories from illegal occupation. The JnU claims it had the dormitories under its control nearly three decades ago.

Yesterday, students also demolished part of the boundary wall of the adjacent Samabaya Bank and set fire to

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some makeshift shops around 1:00pm. It took two fire-fighting units to douse the flames.

Enquired about the students' movement, Shariful Islam, president of JnU unit Bangladesh Chhatra League, said: "The Samabaya Bank is on a piece of land which is a vested property. We want to lease the land from the government and use it for a teacher-student centre."

The VC said as the site of Samabaya Bank is very close to the university campus, they have been trying to lease the land from the government for last six months. "In exchange, we can offer the bank Habibur Rahman Hall, which is a little away from the campus. Else, we can pay the bank the full costs of the lease," mentioned the VC.

Commuters suffered long tailbacks at Rayshaheb Bazar intersection during the demonstrations yesterday.

Sutrapur police reached the spot around 2:30pm, but did not prevent the agitators from running amok.

Khalilur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sutrapur Police Station, said law enforcers were there to avoid any trouble.