

## JU closed amid violent protests

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**AUTHORITIES** closed Jahangirnagar University till August 25 after violent clashes between students and the police on the campus and neighbouring areas on Wednesday night and Thursday in which at least 30 were injured.

The clash first broke out after some unnamed people had stabbed Chhatra League activist Tahmidul Islam Likhon near the main university gate about 9:30pm on Wednesday.

As the news of Tahmidul

being stabbed spread, several hundred students, mostly BCL activists of Mir Mosharraf Hossain Hall, the Bangabandhu Hall, the Al Beruni Hall, the Kamaluddin Hall and the Bhasani Hall, brought out processions on the campus, demanding immediate arrest of Tahmidul's attackers.

Tahmidul, a master's degree student of economics, is a resident of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall.

After the incident, the police arrested Nahid, a student of anthropology, at the Mir Mosharraf Hossain Hall

on charge of attacking Tahmidul.

Some students unhappy about Nahid's arrest vandalised the house of the provost, Emdadul Haque and reportedly assaulted him in protest against the arrest.

As the police tried to take Nahid with them, another group of Chhatra League activists attacked the police and tried to snatch away Nahid, prompting the law-enforcers to attack the students.

Campus sources said that the police had fired rubber bullets to contain the situation, resulting in injuries to

at least five students.

At one point, several hundred students, mostly Chhatra League supporters, came out of the campus in a procession and damaged many vehicles, including buses and trucks, that were passing by the university and blocked the Dhaka-Aricha Road.

The students gathered near the main and the third gate of the university while the police personnel gathered at Prantik, another gate to the campus.

At least 20 students, 7 policemen and 3 journalists

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injured in the clashes between the students and the police on Wednesday and Thursday.

The blockade of the road continued through Thursday evening.

In view of the campus situation, the university syndicate at an emergency meeting reviewed the situation and closed the university till August 25.

The closure took place a week before the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays to head off further violence.

The university registrar, Abu Bakar Siddique, told New Age that the university would remain closed till August 25. The authorities asked male students to vacate their halls by 6:00pm on Thursday and female students by 9:00am on Friday.

The authorities also postponed elections to four out of six deans, scheduled for Thursday, for an indefinite period, Abu Bakar said.

A six-member committee, headed by the pro-vice-chancellor, Farhad Hossain, has been set up to investigate the incident and identify the people responsible for it. The committee has been asked to submit its report in 21 working days.

Traffic on the Dhaka-Aricha Road resumed about 3:30pm when the students called off the blockage minutes after the syndicate had decided to close the univer-

sity.

The blockade had created severe congestion on both ends of the road and caused immense sufferings to thousands of long-distance passengers.

About 500 policemen were deployed on the campus and at key points in neighbouring areas on Thursday afternoon.

The Savar circle assistant superintendent of police, Abdus Salam, said that necessary security had been ensured on the campus.

'We came to know of the syndicate's decision on the closure of the university and arranged the required level of security.'

The university authorities in a statement said, 'A female anthropology student levelled allegations against Tahmidul Islam Likhon that he had harassed her over telephone on Wednesday noon.'

'She lodged a complaint through the chair of her department... Consequently, some unnamed people stabbed Tahmidul Islam about 9:00pm,' the statement said.

According to the statement, Tahmidul told the police that Nahid, a resident of the Mir Mosharraf Hossain Hall, had stabbed him.

Tahmidul had been out of the campus for long but returned to the campus recently after a change in the position of the vice-chancel-

lor after months of protests.

The Ashulia police officer-in-charge, Sheikh Badrul Alam, said that the students had gathered in several points of the road since Wednesday midnight. They started fire with woods and tyres.

The students also blocked the stretch of the highway spanning more than a kilometre, from the C&B Gate to Prantik Gate.

About 11:30am on Thursday, the police charged at them with truncheons in front of Prantik Gate and fired rubber bullets to disperse the students in which several students became injured.

Demonstrating students demanded resignation of the proctor, Tapan Saha, and the Mir Mosharraf Hossain Hall provost, Emdadul Haque.

They also held the vice-chancellor, Anwar Hossain, responsible for what had happened since Wednesday night.

The students vandalised the main university gate and pelted several other university buildings with stones. They did not attend their classes and laid siege to several academic buildings.

On Thursday, the vice-chancellor, the pro-vice-chancellor, the registrar, the treasurer, Mohammad Nasiruddin, and the proctor tried to calm the students but failed.

Teachers who earlier rallied against the former vice-

chancellor Shariff Enamul Kabir, meanwhile, expressed their dissatisfaction about the deferral of the deans' elections.

Arts and humanities dean candidate Kamrul Ahsan Tito said that the elections were postponed deliberately and in a planned way as 'they know that they will lose.'

Jahangirnagar University has witnessed several rounds of movements in recent times.

Teachers teamed up as Sammilita Shikkhak Parishad rallied on the campus to push for the elections to the positions of the deans and the syndicate and the senate before the vice-chancellor's panel polls.

Classes and tests at most of the faculties were cancelled because of the teachers' protests in July 14-20.

The university has also seen months of protests after English department student Zubair Ahmed died on January 9 after being tortured by a group of activists of the Bangladesh Chhatra League, the ruling Awami League's student wing, on the campus the day before.

Shariff Enamul Kabir, who was vice-chancellor then, was removed from his position in the face of protests by students and teachers.

Dhaka University teacher Anwar Hossain replaced Enamul Kabir as the vice-chancellor on May 17.