

Nahid pledges steps to recover JnU dorms

Teachers go on strike from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday pledged to take steps to recover 11 dormitories, which Jagannath University (JnU) claims to have had under its control nearly three decades ago, from illegal occupation.

However, apparently unconvinced by the minister's assurance, teachers of the university have announced an indefinite strike from today with the demand for recovery of the dormitories and removal of two police officials.

Students took to the streets around 11:00am yesterday, burnt tyres and halted vehicular movement on Sadarghat-Gulistan and Babubazar-Jatrabari routes to press home their demand.

At one stage they blocked the vehicle of

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Nahid pledges

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Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid when it was getting past Roy Shaheb Bazar intersection in Old Dhaka. He was returning from an event at nearby Kobi Nazrul College.

Nahid then got out of the car and talked to the agitating crowd. He told the protesters that he had spoken to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on the issue and urged the "occupants" to leave the dormitories.

"Otherwise, steps will soon be taken as per the law against them," he added.

Students demanded that measures be taken within the next couple of days.

They also waylaid former home minister Sahara Khatun's vehicle in that area around 12:00noon when she was going to the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge's Court to attend a programme there.

The demonstration, joined by some 1,000 students, continued for nearly three hours under the banner of "Jagannath Bishwabidyalayer Bedakhal Howa Hall Uddhar Sangram Parishad", causing a long tailback in the area.

Convenor of the parishad and president of JnU Chhatra League Shariful Islam said they had not planned to block the roads but they did it after being informed of the minister's arrival in the area.

"We hope that immediate steps will be taken to recover the halls," he said.

Earlier in the day, students collected mass signature on the campus to reinforce their demand.

The students have been staging demonstrations since February 12 to press home their demand for getting back the dormitories, including Tibet Hall, a part of which is allegedly occupied by lawmaker and Awami League leader Haji Mohammad Selim.

Meanwhile, JnU teachers have declared an indefinite strike from today, demanding recovery of the dormitories and removal of Harunur-Rashid, deputy commissioner of police of Lalbagh zone and Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

"Teachers will not take classes from 11:00am to 4:00pm everyday," Sarkar Ali Akkas, president of Jagannath University Teachers Association, told the Daily Star last night.

He, however, said that exams would remain out of the strike's purview.

The teachers demanded removal of the police officials within 24 hours following Sunday's clash between police and protesters which left at least 50 people, including teachers and students, injured.