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Gopalganj univ closed, students attacked

BSMRSTU Correspondent | Updated at 12:26am on September 22, 2019



Bangladesh General Students' Rights Protection Council holds a rally at Raju memorial monument at Dhaka University on Saturday extending solidarity to the movement of the students of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University in Gopalganj. — New Age photo

At least 50 students, including three working as journalists, were injured in an attack on the protesting students of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University in Gopalganj on Saturday hours after the authorities announced that the university would remain closed till October 3.

The injured journalists are – Shafiul Kayes, campus correspondent of the Bangladesh Today, Jahidul Islam, campus correspondent of the Pratidin Sangbad and Tawhid Islam, campus correspondent of the Career Times.

Students alleged that a group of villagers backed by BSMRSTU vice-chancellor Khondoker Md Nasiruddin carried out the attack on the demonstrating students in Balur Math, Sobhan Sarak, Gobra Madrassah and Nilamath areas near the campus as they continued their protest rejecting the notice of the authorities to vacate their halls by 10:00am on the Saturday.

Several hundreds of BSMRSTU students were agitating in front of the university's administration building to press home their demand for resignation of its VC.

The protests continued till submission of the report at early Sunday.

Some 20 teachers from different departments came to the protest venue in front of the administrative building at about 10:00pm. They said that they came there 'give protection' to the protesting students.

'The university authorities did not protect the students. We came here as they have no protection while they continue their protests despite falling night,' a teacher told New Age at about 11:30pm on Saturday.

Though the protesting students immediately could not trace the attackers, they later said that they suspected that a student of the university's management department and a local leader of the Juba League along with a group of outsiders conducted the attack on the students.

On the other hand, Gopalganj district unit of the Bangladesh Chhatra League protested the attack on the general students.

In solidarity with the agitating BSMRSTU students, students of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University and Rajshahi University brought out processions protesting the attack on the BSMRSTU students and closure of that university.

They demanded removal of the BSMRSTU VC for what they said his involvement in corruption, autocratic behaviour, sexual harassment on female students, recruitment forgery and misuse of power.

After the university authorities announced at 9:00am that the campus would be shut till October 3 in the face of the ongoing student protests, the attack on the students was carried out at about 11:00am.

University registrar Nuruddin Ahmed issued a notice in this regard at about 9:00am and directed the students to vacate the dormitories by 10:00am.

The notice said that the members of the university's regent board gave their oral opinion in favour of shutting the university till October 3 to ensure peace on the campus, resolve disagreements between different groups and avoid any untoward incident.

It said that a 12-day vacation will be added to the scheduled vacation of the forthcoming puja.

According to the academic calendar, the vacation for the puja is scheduled to start from October 6 and end on October 8 while October 4 and 5 are weekly holidays.

But, the agitating students announced that they would continue their protests until their demand was met and they decided to stay on at the dormitories defying the authorities' notice.

Following the students' decision the university authorities cut off the power and water supplies to the dormitories. Besides, they also stopped the transport services so that those students living outside the campus could not join the demonstrations on the campus.

Immediately after the attack, the injured could not be taken to hospitals as the transport services were halted and latter at least 30 injured students were admitted to the Gopalganj General Hospital where the condition of four students was critical.

The university's assistant proctor, Humayun Kabir, resigned from his post following the ongoing incidents, while about a quarter of teachers extended their support to the demonstrators.

Supporting the demonstrators, former BSMRSTU students held a human chain at the Picture Palace intersection in Khulna at 5.00pm.

In a letter, Gopalganj district unit of the BCL demanded immediate punishment of the attackers and extended their support for fulfilment of all logical demands of the students.

The students' demonstration against Nasiruddin began on Wednesday night after four student leaders talked live on social media about the existing problems and corruption prevailing at the university.

About the BSMRSTU situation, deputy minister for education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury told New Age on Saturday that the ministry had asked the Gopalganj deputy commissioner to inform the ministry about the facts of the movement by the next working day.

He said that the ministry would take necessary steps after holding a meeting on the matter.

He said that it was necessary to find the reasons why the students stayed on the campus after the university was closed.

The BSMRSTU vice-chancellor on Saturday told reporters that he suspected that anti-government groups were involved in the student protest.

Students of different universities held protest rallies following a call by the Bangladesh General Students' Rights Protection Council while the Chhatra Federation and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front brought out processions at Dhaka University expressing solidarity with the demand made by the protesting Gopalganj university students.

In another development, students of Begum Rokyea University in Rangpur blocked the Dhaka-Rangpur highway demanding the resignation of the vice-chancellor.



Editor: **Nurul Kabir**, Published by the Chairman, Editorial Board ASM Shahidullah Khan on behalf of Media New Age Ltd. 30 Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208 Phone: 880-2-8170450-56 (PABX), Fax: 880-2-8170457

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