

Attack reignites spirit

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When they reached Ramna Park, the Shahbagh protesters, fearing an attack, rushed there.

A clash followed between the groups inside the park, in which 15 people were injured, police said. Six Hefajat men, who were among the injured, were arrested.

However, the threat of violence could not dampen the spirit of the protesters. People poured in their hundreds and then in their thousands once news of the violence spread; and with renewed zeal, they chanted slogans in unison. Within an hour, Shahbagh had turned into a site of protest, fully charged and ready for battle. "The time to stay inactive is over; I urge all residents of Dhaka to come out on the streets to counter this terrorism," said Imran H Sarker, convenor of Gonojagoron Mancha, from the stage.

"We have been carrying out a non-violent movement for the last two months. Please don't try to incite us [to violence] because, once enraged, we can only be appeased with your blood."

Speakers at the rally strongly decried the attempts of the Hefajat-e-Islam to challenge the existence of a secular, democratic Bangladesh.

In the name of Hefajat, "war criminals of Jamaat" and their collaborators held a rally at Motijheel, Imran said, while addressing the crowd.

The language used by the speakers at the Hefajat's rally yesterday and the demands that were made certainly went against the spirit of the Liberation War of

Bangladesh and that is tantamount to sedition, he said. The Hefajat and war criminals are pushing the country towards a critical state and the government is encouraging and protecting them.

Imran urged people of the country to bring out processions with the national flag on Monday morning to resist the hartal called by the Hefajat. Gonojagoron Mancha announced a mass sit-in programme for April 10 from 11:00am to 1:00pm in front of the law ministry to press home its demands, and a grand rally to be held on April 14.

The candidates of the ongoing Higher Secondary Certificate examinations are exempted from the student strike on April 9.

"At their rally, they [Hefajat leaders] threatened the values of our liberation war," Shahriar Kabir said, addressing the gathering at Shahbagh.

Even if one of Hefajat's 13 demands was accepted, Bangladesh would not remain itself, he said.

"It will become another Afghanistan of Mollahs and Omars."

He also demanded that a committee be formed to investigate the involvement of Hefajat leaders in war crimes in 1971 and terrorism.

Maruf Rosul, a Gonojagoron Mancha activist, said there was information that some 50 Dhaka University teachers had participated at yesterday's rally of the Hefajat. He condemned these teachers for their acts against the spirit of liberation.

During the clash with the

Shahbagh protesters in the afternoon, Hefajat men vandalised several vehicles near Kakrail Mosque and the residence of the chief Justice and broke fences at Ramna Park.

Police fired blank shots and hurled teargas canisters to disperse the two groups and detained the six activists of Hefajat, the officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station said.

Soon after the Hefajat's rally at Motijheel ended around 5:00pm, its activists along with Jamaat-Shibir men marched towards the Gonojagoron Mancha through the gate near Kakrail Mosque, witnesses said.

When the Shahbagh protesters heard that people from the opposite direction were coming towards them, they took up whatever they could find -- sticks, stones or bricks. Then they ran towards the alleged attackers, chanting slogans. At that time the organisers of Gonojagoron Mancha were urging them to stay calm and collected.

"We heard about the attack. So I picked up a stick, and ran towards the direction of the attackers, without a second thought," said Ridwan Kabir, a student.

"Do you think they [Hefajat men] can scare us and tell us what to do, and we'll go into hiding?" cried Lutfia Halima, who also had a stick in her hands.

Many of the attackers were in jeans, pants and caps, and were likely to be Jamaat-Shibir men, according to witnesses.

The attackers were accompanied by Jamaat-Shibir men, said Shah Alam, OC of Ramna Police Station, said.



This is the bulletin published in 2004 in which Khelafat Majlish Ameer Habibur revealed his links with Huji and his meeting with Osama Bin Laden. He was a key organiser of Hefajat-e Islam's Dhaka long march and rally at Shapla Chattar yesterday.

Target Taliban rule

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(Huji) Bangladesh and has links with international militant groups.

Habibur himself revealed the link in an interview with a bulletin titled "Islami Biplob" (Islamic revolution), published on August 20, 1998, in Sylhet with the express purpose of celebrating "the total victory of Taliban and establishment of an Islamic state in Afghanistan".

The Huji Bangladesh top brass include Shaikhul Hadith Allama Azizul Haq (who passed away in August 2012), who was also chief of a faction of Islami Oikya Jote, a former partner of the BNP-led alliance; Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish second-in-command (now chief) Muhammad Habibur Rahman of Sylhet; Aatur Rahman Khan of Kishoreganj; Sultan Jaok of Chittagong; Abdul Mannan of Faridpur; and Habibullah of Noakhali.

All of them were involved in different Islamic organisations and madrasas. Aatur Rahman Khan was elected MP on a BNP ticket in 1991 from Kishoreganj-3 constituency.

In an interview several years ago, Habibur disclosed the names of people with whom he had travelled to Afghanistan via Pakistan in 1988, visited some Taliban militant camps and also met al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

The bulletin on its front page ran an interview of Habibur in which he gave a detailed account of his visit to Afghanistan in 1988.

He said, "An invitation from Harkat-ul-Jihad Al Islami made it possible for me to make the fortunate trip to Afghanistan... Those of us who visited the Afghan war fields during that trip are Shaikhul Hadith, Aatur Rahman Khan, Sultan Jaok, Abdul Mannan, Habibullah, myself and three others."

In Pakistan, leaders of the local chapter of Huji greeted the nine members of the Bangladeshi team and took them to the Huji's Karachi

office.

Habibur said Huji Pakistan chief Saifullah Akhtar and a Bangladeshi Mujahideen, Abdur Rahman Shahid, drove them to an Afghan Mohajir (literally, refugee) camp on the Pak-Afghan border. They stayed at the camp and visited some injured Mujahideens and an Islamic cadet college, where the cadets received them with a guard of honour.

Abdur Rahman then drove them to the residence of top Mujahideen leader Abde Rabbir Rasul Saiaf, the narration goes on. The house was defended like a fort with anti-aircraft guns and armed guards.

On their way to Afghanistan the next day, the Bangladeshi team visited a special Mujahideen training camp in Pakistan and met about a dozen Bangladeshi young Mujahideens led by one Abdul Quddus. They watched youths from different countries being imparted military training on a mountainous terrain. The arms they were being trained to operate included rocket-propelled grenades.

That night Habibur shared his meal of dry cold bread with "a handsome young Arab". He said, "When I enquired about his identity, I was told he was Osama bin Laden, a son of one of the richest Saudi families."

The next day they entered Afghanistan and arrived at a Mujahideen cantonment on a mountaintop. They visited an armoury inside a tunnel. They were informed that some Russian forces were in position nearby and that every one must prepare to fight.

"All of us were given Kalashnikov [AK-47] rifles," he said, adding that they stayed the night at the camp, while a Mujahideen team advanced towards the enemy position and engaged in a skirmish. The following day they started their return journey.

In the interview, Habibur asserted, "Only the establish-

ment of a Khilafat (pan-Islamic movement)-based state following the Taliban ideology can change the lot of the nation."

Habibur is also the convener of Sahaba Sainik Parishad and founding principal of Jameya Madania Islamia, a madrasa at Kazir Bazar, Sylhet.

The government banned Huji on October 17, 2005, branding it a "self-proclaimed terrorist organisation".

Widespread criticism was sparked in 2006 when the Awami League made a controversial deal with Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish on December 23 that year.

In the deal, which never saw the light of day, both sides had agreed, among other points, that if the Awami League-led grand alliance assumed power, fatwa (religious edict) by certified Hakkani alems (educated clerics) would be recognised and the government would recognise the degrees conferred by traditional Qawmi madrasas.

Sylhet Awami League leaders were outraged in 2006 when Habibur became a possible nominee of the grand alliance in a Sylhet constituency for the January 22, 2007 elections, which were later cancelled.

The Awami League leaders and activists of Sylhet-6 (Golapganj and Biyanibazar upazilas) had threatened to quit the party en masse if Habibur was nominated by the grand alliance.

Some Awami League leaders in Sylhet told this correspondent in 2006 that Habibur was against the Liberation War and against the Awami League. He was against female leadership and had acted as a factor behind the Awami League's losing elections in Sylhet more than once.

"He had prevented poet Shamsur Rahman and Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam from entering Sylhet. In 1992-1993, I managed to



IMAGE: STAR ARCHIVE

bring Shamsur Rahman to Biyanibazar, but could not take him to Sylhet because of Habibur Rahman," Aatur Rahman Khan, then Biyanibazar upazila Awami League general secretary, told The Daily Star in 2006.

In the 1990's, Habibur had declared a Tk 50,000 reward for author Taslima Nasrin's head.

Yesterday, at the rally at Shapla Chattar, copies of a booklet were distributed. A line of the booklet read, "If alems and olamas can run Afghanistan then Bangladeshis alems would be able to run the country with Allah's help."

Strike stalls goods

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Chairman of the group Abul Bashar Chowdhury said they had to bear \$14,000 every day as demurrage due to overstay of the vessel.

Contacted, Mahbub Uddin Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Cargo Vessel Owners Association, said they could not pay the enhanced wages to the workers as their income dropped over the last two years.

Cement factories had been operating their own water vessels to carry the cement-making materials from mother vessels, hampering the income of the lighter vessels significantly, he added.

He urged the government to mediate between the owners of cement factories and lighter vessels.

Big-sized cargo vessels cannot berth at the jetties of the port and get anchored at the outer anchorage and deep sea with imported goods to be unloaded by the lighter vessels.

The lighter vessels later transport the goods to different private jetties in Chittagong and other destinations in the country.

Around 1.5 crore tonnes of goods was transported from the vessels at the outer anchorage in this process last year, according to data from the CPA.

secretary general of Hefajat, however, around 1:00pm announced that they were "withdrawing and rejecting" the slogan against the prime minister, terming it "anti-liberation".

Maulana Foyezullah, Hefajat's joint secretary general who read out the 13-point demand at the rally, is also secretary general of IOJ.

Abdul Latif Nejami is the chairman of the Islami Oikya Jote. Also chairman of the Nejame Islami Party, he called upon the gathering to wage a tough movement to oust the present administration.

Khelafat Majlish Ameer Mohammad Ishak is another top leader in the BNP-led alliance. He spoke prominently at the meeting labelling the government as an anti-Islam element.

Shamsul Alam, Hefajat naye-e-ameer, holds the post of naye-e-ameer in both the Olama Committee and IOJ.

Another Islami Oikya Jote leader Moinuddin Ruhi is the Hefajat's joint secretary general.

HARTAL VIOLENCE

Driver hurt in Ctg dies at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A battery-run three-wheeler driver Md Musa, who sustained severe burn injuries during the Jamaat-enforced hartal in Chittagong on March 25, succumbed to his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

Contacted, Abdus Sattar, Musa's cousin confirmed the death, adding that they were taking preparations to take the body to Chittagong.

On March 25, some pro-hartal pickets vandalised Musa's vehicle and also set it ablaze, pouring petrol on it in the port city's Rahattarpole area. Nearly 80 percent of his body was brunt in the arson attack.

The ill-fated driver, 25, was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, doctors of the hospital referred him to Dhaka for better treatment.

Khaleda

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the detained BNP leaders were not granted bail by today.

Chaired by Khaleda at her Gulshan office, the meeting decided to suspend the BNP-led alliance's earlier announced April 10 rally in the capital aimed at ousting the government, Shawkat Hosain Nilu, chief of a component of the alliance National Peoples Party, told The Daily Star.

The BNP chief asked Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Abdul Latif Nejami and leaders of Khelafat Majlish and Nejame Islami Party why Hefajat-e-Islam did not announce tougher programmes including two or three-day hartal from its rally at Motijheel in the capital yesterday.

She also asked them why they the Hefajat programme was not turned into a sit-in for several days, though its field level leaders demanded so, a top leader of the alliance told this correspondent.

Wishing anonymity, he said, "They [alliance leaders] had information that the grassroots level activists of Hefajat wanted continuing the Shapla Chatter programme. But its ameer did not agree to it."

Earlier, at a meeting of BNP standing committee, Khaleda came down heavily on its members for the same reason, said meeting sources.

Brahmaputra

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He added that Bangladesh was equally concerned about a move in China to divert Brahmaputra's water.

The issue of China reportedly planning to construct barrages on Yarlung Tsangpor (as the river is called in Tibet) was raised by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when he had first met the new Chinese president in Durban last week.

China maintains that the barrages do not involve diversion of the river water. "Arunachal Pradesh," said Manmohan, "is the source of water for the Brahmaputra basin and thus the primary stakeholder in all respects in the management of the river in terms of hydropower generation and navigation."

The high commissioner later called on the state's Governor General (retd) JJ Singh at Raj Bhawan and discussed various matters including inland waterways, Brahmaputra river project and areas of prospective trade and commercial activities.

Karim informed the governor of the proposed meetings on the Brahmaputra and Ganga basins with India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

9 RALLIES

April 11	Sylhet
April 12	Brahmanbaria
April 13	Mymensingh
April 18	Barisal
April 19	Faridpur
April 20	Khulna
April 26	Chittagong
April 29	Rajshahi

HEFAJAT DEMANDS

- Reinstatement of the phrase "Absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah" in the constitution as one of the fundamental principles of state policy
- Enact a law providing for capital punishment for maligning Allah, Islam and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and smear campaigns against Muslims
- Stop all propaganda and "derogatory comments" about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by the "atheist leaders" of the Shahbagh movement, bloggers and other anti-Islamists; arrest them and ensure stern punishment to them
- Stop attacking, shooting, killing and persecuting the Prophet-loving Islamic scholars, madrasa students and people united by belief in Allah
- Release all arrested Islamic scholars and madrasa students
- Lift restrictions on mosques and remove obstacles to the holding of religious programmes
- Declare "Qadianis" non-Muslim and call a halt to their publicity and conspiracies
- Stop foreign cultural intrusions including free-mingling of men and women and candlelit vigils, and put an end to adultery, injustice, shamelessness, etc. in the name of freedom of expression and conscience
- Stop turning Dhaka, the city of mosques, into a city of idols, and stop setting up sculptures at intersections, colleges and universities
- Scrap anti-Islam women policy and education policy and make Islamic education mandatory from primary to higher secondary levels
- Stop threatening and intimidating teachers and students of Qawmi madrasas, Islamic scholars, imams and khatibs
- Stop propagating hatred among the younger generation of Muslims by misrepresentation of Islamic culture in the media
- Stop anti-Islam activities by NGOs, evil attempts by Qadianis and conversions by Christian missionaries in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and elsewhere in the country

7.1 quake hits Indonesia

AP, Jakarta

A powerful 7.1 magnitude earthquake hit a remote part of eastern Indonesia yesterday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries, an official said.

The tremor struck about 75 km underground in Papua province, according to US Geological Survey.

The quake was felt across many parts of Papua, including the capital Jayapura and the copper town of Timika and Wamena, another town in the mountains, he said. Residents ran from their houses in panic, and many remained outside fearing aftershocks.