

GONOJAGORON MANCHA

Three factions clash at Shahbagh

DU CORRESPONDENT

Three factions of Gonojagoron Mancha clashed at the capital's Shahbagh yesterday, with the factions blaming each other for picking up the fight.

At least eight people, including the leader of one group Imran H Sarker, were injured.

They all took treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Haider Ali, assistant sub-inspector of DMCH police camp.

The clash began around 7:00pm when two groups -- one led by Imran and the other by pro-Awami League activist Kamal Pasha Chowdhury -- were bullying each other from separate rallies, around 15 feet apart, before the National Museum.

Another faction under the banner of Shahbagh Andolon, led by Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree President Bappaditya Basu, held separate demonstrations in close proximity.

All the three programmes began around 4:00pm, and they all were demanding the death penalty of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee, a war crimes convict whose death sentence has been commuted to imprisonment till death by the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

Imran and Bappa declared their

programmes on Wednesday, and Pasha announced his the next day.

From the beginning of the rally, speakers from Kamal Pasha's faction verbally attacked Imran's group, saying Imran's movement was politically motivated and that some Jamaat-Shibir men infiltrated in his group, witnesses said.

They also said only the Awami League government could try the war criminals.

Hitting back at his rival, Imran said the government split the Mancha using its associate bodies so that the youth could not speak in favour of the trial.

Members of his faction also said the commuting of Sayedee's sentence was an outcome of the government's compromise with Jamaat.

At least 13 loudspeakers were installed at the venue, making it difficult for people to get what was being said at the rallies.

Police presence was high.

Imran-led faction tried to bring out a procession towards Shahbagh crossing following its rally, but police shoved them back.

Following the incident, as Imran and his supporters retreated to the museum, both groups were locked in a clash, throwing chairs at each other, as the police looked on.

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Three factions of Gonojagoron Mancha, a platform that demands the highest penalty for war criminals, have a scuffle, inset, and throw chairs at each other at Shahbagh intersection in the capital yesterday evening.

PHOTO: STAR



Rab officers 'asked to kill Nur too'

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so that the Rab members could dump the bodies in the river without being seen.

Six bodies, including those of Nazrul and Chandan, were found in the Shitalakkhya river on April 30 and the other was found a day later.

Nur Hossain, who had a longstanding political rivalry with Nazrul, allegedly gave the Rab men Tk 6 crore for killing the Narayanganj panel mayor.

According to the sources, when Arif was returning after dumping the bodies, the top official from the Rab headquarters kept calling him on his phone. But he didn't receive the phone. Instead, he called his CO Tareque and asked why the top official, who will be termed "Sir" hereafter, was calling him.

Tareque said he would inform him after contacting "Sir". Later, Tareque called him to say that "Sir" had asked Arif and his team members to visit his office.

In the early hours that day, Arif with his team reached the office. Seeing him, "Sir" said, "What happened? Where is Nazrul?"

Arif was surprised to hear this because he knew that "Sir" was informed of everything.

When "Sir" repeated the question, Arif told him that he had not done anything without the CO's orders and asked "Sir" to contact Tareque if he wanted to know anything about this.

"Sir" then called Tareque and handed the phone over to Arif, who asked his CO why the top official was asking about Nazrul's whereabouts. Tareque replied he too did not understand why "Sir" was doing so.

On April 29, Arif and Tareque again met "Sir" on the latter's order. During the meeting, "Sir" asked Arif what conversation he had with Nur Hossain, for how long Nur had been giving information about Nazrul, what bank-related talks Arif had with Nur and what had been done with the bodies.

Then Arif told him that Nur Hossain had been giving information about Nazrul for one and a half months, he had asked Nur Hossain to give the [bank] account number of "a trusted person" and the bodies had been dumped in the Meghna.

Then "Sir" said, "Nur Hossain must be killed by today."

Arif, however, said Narayanganj had already heated up centring on "the Nazrul issue" and killing Nur Hossain

would turn the situation out of control, sources quoted Arif as saying.

"Sir" then told Tareque, "CO, you must do the job."

In the afternoon that day, they came to know that they had been closed to the Rab headquarters and were later sent back to their respective forces.

THE ABDUCTION
Arif said Tareque had assigned him for the Nazrul job during an officers' conference in March, and ordered Narayanganj camp commander Rana to assist him.

After several failed attempts to catch Nazrul, Arif started using Nur Hossain as the source. In the morning of April 27, Nur informed him that Nazrul was at Narayanganj court to appear in a case.

The CO then ordered Arif and Rana to launch a drive to nab Nazrul.

The duo with their teams waited around the court. Around 1:00pm, Nazrul along with his aides came out of the court premises in a white car and drove off towards the Sign Board area. Already deployed by Rana, a Rab patrol team stopped Nazrul's car around 1:30pm near the City Corporation Gate.

Nazrul and his four associates were

then dragged into Arif's microbus. Right then a black car arrived there. "A gentleman" [Chandan] came out of the car and kept shouting. Rana then picked the man and his driver into his microbus, said the sources.

They drove towards Narsingdi and stopped at Tarabo. Minutes later Rana's microbus reached there, but Rana had already got off at Chittagong Road's Shimrail.

Arif then called his CO and told him that Nazrul and six others had been picked up. He sought directions for the next course of action. In response, Tareque asked Arif to kill all the seven, saying, "There should be no eyewitnesses".

Then, Arif asked one Belal of his camp to prepare seven packets of bricks and drove off towards Narsingdi camp.

THE MURDER
Around 8:00pm on April 27, Arif informed Tareque that they were preparing to return to Narayanganj. But the CO said police were on high alert on the roads.

However, they started for Narayanganj and bought anaesthetics and a syringe on the way.

On reaching Kanchpur, he again

called the CO and requested him to ask Rana to send an engine boat to Kanchpur BIWTA Ghat. Arif also asked Nur Hossain over the phone to make sure that there was no public gathering under Kanchpur bridge.

Finally before committing the coldblooded murders, Arif informed Tareque that his team was ready to kill and dump the seven. The CO replied, "Ok, go ahead," the sources quoted Arif as saying in the statement.

Eight members of the team, including Sub-inspector Purnendu Bala, Sainik [private] Alim, Sainik Tajul, Constable Shihab, Nayek Belal, Sepoy Taiyab and Nayek Hira, injected Nazrul and six others with the anaesthetics and then smothered them to death with plastic bags.

The bodies were loaded on the trawler waiting there around 1:00am and the Rab members steered off to the Meghna confluence from Kanchpur.

When they reached the confluence after an hour and a half, the Rab personnel tied each body with a packet of bricks and dumped those into the river. Before dumping, they cut a hole in the abdomen of each of the bodies.

Alibaba Group raises \$21.8b in record US IPO

BLOOMBERG

Alibaba Group Holding Ltd, the e-commerce company that started in 1999 with \$60,000 cobbled together by Jack Ma, cemented its status as a symbol of China's economic emergence by raising \$21.8 billion in a US initial public offering.

The company and shareholders including Yahoo! Inc sold 320.1 million shares for \$68 each, according to a statement, after offering them for \$66 to \$68. The sale -- which values Alibaba at \$167.6 billion -- is already the largest by any company in the US and has the potential to break the global record if additional shares are sold to underwriters.

Ma, a former English teacher who started the company in his Hangzhou apartment, drew crowds of money managers to meetings held around the world as the company pitched itself to investors. Alibaba profited from China's burgeoning consumer class by

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It was a plot against govt

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Without naming any individual or organisation, Hasina said they had spread lies against her government bringing the allegation of corruption in this project. "We challenged it, and now it has been proved their allegation was baseless and intentional," she added.

She said a section of people in the country do not like the government's development activities and always tries to find faults with the government.

Television channels and air conditioned rooms are their preferred places to launch criticism on the government, mentioned the PM. "We've allowed those private television channels and helped keeping them alive through providing them with uninterrupted power supply."

Expressing her firm resolve to make Bangladesh a self-reliant country, the PM said Bangladesh would certainly stand

on its own feet.

On the recent floods in different northern districts, she said her government will construct houses for those who have lost homes in the flooding.

On her party's electoral pledge to reach electricity to every house, she said her government initiated a massive programme to this end. Under the programme, she said, a nuclear power plant is being constructed and projects have been undertaken for producing power from coal, biogas and 30 lakh solar panels.

The government, she noted, has taken numerous steps for creating residential facilities in rural areas. "Gradually, residential flats will be constructed in every union.... A day will come when there will be no thatched houses in the country."

Gopalganj district administration hosted the rally. Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, State Minister for Power,

Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid Bipu, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroz Chumki, and local Awami League leaders spoke, among others.

Earlier, Hasina arrived in Gopalganj in the morning on a daylong visit. She inaugurated power connections to 12,000 families of 55 villages under Tungipara and Kotlipara upazilas, Tungipara 5-KVA power sub-station, 30-kilowatt solar panel at Tungipara Upazila Parishad Building, a 39-metre guarder bridge on Razapur Kheyaghat-Jaharekandi road, a 17-metre RCC guarder bridge on Purba Latenga-Pashchim Latenga road and a 30.05-metre guarder bridge on Bandhabari Union Parishad-Bhai Bhai Bazar road under Kotlipara upazila.

She also attended a milad and doa mahfil at the Mazar Complex of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Giving voice

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The device, a small, silver and three-inch rectangle, translates hand gestures into text and voice.

"The deaf population is struggling to communicate with the real world, and this device, we are hoping, will change their everyday life," said 36-year-old Tarik.

Back then, there was a device in the market, Leap Motion, analogous to a mouse, which receives hand and finger motions as inputs without any touch.

Tarik thought of making software for Leap Motion sensors that would translate hand gestures into text and voice.

He then launched his own company Baby Taxi in Canada and engaged Syed Sabbir and Tanveer Ahmed in the initiative. Sabbir and Tanveer worked from Bangladesh to develop an algorithm based on American Sign

Language (ASL).

The software, named ASL-360, is designed to translate hand, finger motions of a deaf or mute person into spoken words and readable text and then get the responses back to him in text and video forms, Tarik said, explaining the functioning of the equipment. The outputs can be displayed or played on laptops, smartphones and tablets.

Almost ready to launch, the software is now going through trial and error checking, and further adoption of sign languages. The device costs about \$100.

The efforts of Baby Taxi have already drawn support from the deaf community and a couple of high tech firms and a potential investor from the Silicon Valley.

In the first phase, Baby Taxi aims at making the device available to 33

million North-American deaf and mute people.

"After the successful completion of our first project, we will start working for the European and Chinese deaf and mute communities," said Tarik, who has held several leadership roles in information technology at companies such as JumpTV, Comcast, and First West Credit Union.

He was nominated for IT Manager of the Year in 2011 in Canada. Tarik said he also wanted to help Bangladeshis facing similar challenges. But it is quite difficult, as there is no established form of sign language in the country.

Besides, marketing of such a device here is a big challenge and requires assistance from government and non-government organisations working with the mute and deaf community, he added.

Better ties, greater connectivity

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Mukherjee yesterday told Ali that "there is a need for speedy implementation of decisions".

Pranab also raised the issue of connectivity between the two countries and asked to "work on increasing connectivity". The Indian president's remarks on speedy implementation of decisions assume importance as the two central issues of Bangladesh-India relations -- Teesta river water-sharing deal and ratification of the land boundary agreement (LBA) -- are pending in the Indian parliament for quite some time.

Earlier, emerging from a meeting with Indian Water Resources Minister Uma Bharati, Foreign Minister Ali told reporters that both countries are optimistic about "early signing of the Teesta agreement."

Ali described his meeting with Bharati as "fruitful and positive" and said they also discussed issues relating to resources of common rivers and river basin management.

Both the ministers agreed to hold the meeting of the 38th Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) in Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.

They also discussed an interim agreement for sharing waters of Teesta and agreed to hold the 3rd meeting of the Sub-group of the JRC on Tipaimukh hydro-electric project at a convenient time.

Bharati reiterated that India would not implement any project that may have adverse impact on Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, in a statement from the Indian Prime Minister's Office, Modi expressed appreciation for Sheikh Hasina's "personal interest and commitment to the relationship with India" and reiterated India's resolve to continue extending full support to the efforts of Bangladesh for its socio-economic development.

"In this context, he called for greater cooperation between India and Bangladesh in the areas of energy, power, infrastructure development and tourism", the statement read.

"Noting the complementary geographical locations of India and Bangladesh, it was agreed that improved connectivity through development of transportation (road, rail, inland waterways, shipping and air) links would facilitate economic cooperation

and strengthen people-to-people ties," according to the statement.

Foreign Minister Ali extended an invitation on behalf of Sheikh Hasina to Modi to visit Bangladesh and the Indian PM said he looked forward to visiting Bangladesh at the earliest convenience.

During the meeting, Ali recalled the historical, cultural and economic links between India and Bangladesh and expressed appreciation of the special emphasis given by the new government under the leadership of Modi to relations with the SAARC region and India's neighbourhood.

Ali conveyed the strong desire of the people and government of Bangladesh to further strengthen and deepen relations with India.

Our New Delhi correspondent Pallab Bhattacharya reported that Ali had a series of meetings with National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Finance and Defence Minister Arun Jaitley besides Mukherjee and Indian Power, Coal, New and Renewable Energy Minister Piyush Goyal yesterday.

Officials said the whole range of bilateral issues -- power trade, management of water resources, connectivity and security

-- figured in Ali's discussions with the Indian leaders.

At the end of his engagements, Ali declined to tell the media what was being discussed at his meetings with the Indian leaders, saying "I don't want to preempt tomorrow's Joint Consultative Commission meeting."

Asked about Indian media reports about a portion of the Saradha chit fund scam money finding its way to Jamaat-e-Islami in Bangladesh, he said "I won't comment on an internal matter of India."

Ali is leading a high-profile delegation for today's JCC meeting, including Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque and secretaries of seven departments.

While the Teesta deal has been in limbo ever since West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee opposed it just before former Indian PM Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka in September, 2011, Indian parliament is yet to pass a constitution amendment bill that is mandatory to implement the LBA.

The bill, after being placed last year in Rajya Sabha, upper House of parliament, has been referred to a select committee of lawmakers.

Shafiullah replaces

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the acting secretary general Haroon Habib.

Khandker is no longer a member of the forum as well, according to the statement.

The forum of 1971 war veterans made the moves after Khandker stepped down from the post on Wednesday citing his old age as the contributing factor.

Khandker, who was the deputy chief of the liberation forces during the Liberation War, is facing strident criticism from different quarters, including lawmakers, civil society members and freedom fighters, for some controversial claims he made in his recent book "1971: Bhitore Baire".

In the book, the minister of the immediate past Awami League-led government claimed Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had mentioned "Joy Pakistan" at the end of his historic March 7 speech in 1971.

On September 6 this year, 21 SCF leaders in a joint statement criticised

Khandker, saying the contents of his book were "misleading" and lacked objectivity.

Khandker lost the ethical right to lead a national institution like the Sector Commanders' Forum -- Liberation War 1971 by depicting contradictory and misleading information in his book, said the SCF statement yesterday.

"Despite calls from the forum leaders Khandker did not feel the necessity to rectify the flaws in the information given in the book. He has already submitted his resignation letter where he did not mention anything about his book."

The publishers and editors of the controversial book cannot avoid the responsibility of distorting the history in a planned way, added the statement.

The meeting of the executive council of the SCF was addressed, among others, by Col (ret'd) Shamsul Alam, Sarwar Ali, Haroon Habib, M Hamid, Md Nurul Alam, Maj Gen (ret'd) Shahjahan.