

BANGLADESH UPDATE



3,908
New cases in 24hrs



5,35,941
Total cases



8,904
Deaths



5,35,941
Recoveries



2,793,114
Deaths



127,650,976
Total cases



Hefajat-e-Islam activists wreaked havoc during their countrywide hartal yesterday. **Clockwise from bottom left**, a member of Border Guard Bangladesh fires his weapon to quell the violence at Narayanganj's Shanarpar on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway, where Hefajat activists blocked the road and burnt tyres, pieces of wood and other materials from 7:00am yesterday; some members of police and BGB try to reason with the activists during the demonstrations; in Brahmanbaria Sadar, the ground floor of a land office is ablaze and all documents on the floor were destroyed; in the capital's Purana Paltan area, four Awami League supporters take up position on the road against Hefajat activists while armed police officials look on from behind.

PHOTO:
RASHED SHUMON/MASHUK HRIDOV/PALASH KHAN



Control surge in Covid infection

FROM PAGE 1
She said that they will open educational institutions including schools, colleges, and universities after the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr in view of the sudden surge in the Covid-19 infection.

She added, "It is a matter of regret that we cannot open the educational institutes now as there is a fresh surge in the coronavirus infection. We will open the schools, colleges, and universities after Eid."

Sheikh Hasina, also the AL president, asked her party and its associate bodies' leaders and activists to stand by the people as they did during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In this connection, she said, "We all [AL leaders and activists] have to take preparation to work for dispelling the sufferings of the people caused by the fresh surge in Covid-19 infections."

She asked her party leaders and workers to take measures to ensure that the people follow the directives regarding the health guidelines that her government announced since the outbreak of the coronavirus.

The prime minister also directed her

party men to distribute masks among the people and extend all sorts of supports to the distressed people.

AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader gave the welcome address.

AL Presidium Members Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, and Abdur Rahman, Organising Secretary SM Kamal Hossain, Cultural Affairs Secretary Asim Kumar Ukil, International Affairs Secretary Dr Shammi Ahmed, central committee member Prof Merina Jaman, Dhaka South and North City AL General Secretaries Humayun Kabir and SM Mannan Kochi took part in the discussion.

AL Publicity and Publication Secretary Dr Abdus Sobhan Golap conducted the function.

At the outset of the discussion, all the AL leaders stood in solemn silence for one minute to show respect to the memories of the martyrs of the Language Movement, Liberation War, and August 15, 1975 carnage and all the democratic and progressive movements.

I'll pass it all on to young ones

FROM PAGE 1
The 68-year-old champion vocalist and trainer said talent is aplenty in this part of the world.

"There are a number of young talented singers but they need proper training. It is our duty to keep them alive in the music industry," he said, adding that the young talents of Bangladesh are not interested in working hard.

"If they work hard, they will take the lead in world music. Unfortunately, the young talents are not aware of their own abilities," he said, adding that Bangladesh is the land of music, especially instrumentals. "This is the place where Baba Alauddin Khan was born."

Reflecting on his struggles, Chakrabarty said his father was a primary school teacher and his family could not eat even just two meals a day until he was 16.

"My father earned Tk 54.50 at that time and it was insufficient to bear the expenses of our family. I used to sell kantha [quilts] door-to-door, on my bicycle, to earn some extra money," Chakrabarty recalled.

A composer, lyricist and trainer, he got admitted to Rabindra Bharati University with scholarship and gained first position in his BA and MA.

He said that his father supported him unconditionally to build his career as a musician.

Recipient of the Padma Bhushan Award, the third highest civilian award in India in 2020, Ajoy said, "I got a job in a bank. But my father tore apart the appointment letter and said 'if my son earns one taka through music, it is ok but through other means will not be acceptable.'"

He said when he realised that hard work is required to reach a different level, he started practicing for 14-15 hours a day and continued this for seven years.

"And it paid off. I never looked back after that. There is no alternative to hard work."

The legendary Indian classical vocalists said music develops consciousness which is very important for a person to see the bigger picture.

"Concentration gives you an extra power to develop your inner vision through your consciousness. If we close our eyes, we can see a bigger sky. So, to develop inner vision, music is a must."

He also treasures his memories with former Indian president and renowned scientist APJ Abdul Kalam.

"I will take one month off. I will come and will sit in the corner and learn music from Ajoy Ji. Because I like his music. I will have a month off from my duty," Chakrabarty said quoting Kalam, who was visiting Shrutinandan to mark its 10 years celebration.

He said all the famous people crave for music.

"At one stage of life, they realise the frequency of perfection needed to celebrate a fulfilling life," he said.

Asked why Shastriya Sangeet (classical music) is not popular among the masses, Chakrabarty, who was trained under legendary musician Pandit Gyan Prakash Ghosh, said the main issue is time constraints.

"People love to see the Tajmahal but they have less interest in how it was built. It is a natural phenomenon for the common people not to go deeper into anything," he explained.

He said musicians' ego and decision not to teach the masses also played a role.

"Some do not want to teach others. It is a wrong way to look at things. The other point is that people have become too commercial. They are busy for their bread and butter and not many are interested in the amount of time that requires to learn the art."

Hefajat fury rages on

FROM PAGE 1
Brahmanbaria's biggest temple Sree Sree Anandamayee Kali Mandir. They trashed and broke the idols of Krishna and the Goddess Kali.

The donation box for the temple was looted, while the artifacts used for ceremonies were ransacked and strewn about.

"We were performing prayers for Dol Purnima, when 200-300 armed men broke the temple gate and barged into our ceremony. We tried to protect the idol of Goddess Kali, but they shoved us aside and vandalised the idol," said Ashis Paul, president of Anandamayee Kalibari Temple Festival Celebration Committee.

The Sadar Land Office in Brahmanbaria was set on fire and completely destroyed. Columns of smoke billowed from the facility throughout the day as the documents kept burning. Firefighters did not dare go near the scene until 9:30pm, when the mob went home.

Ustad Alauddin Khan Music Academy was shrouded in flames while clouds of black smoke covered the municipality office building and the office of district Awami League General Secretary Al Mamun Sarkar. The Shaheed Dharendra Nath Bhasha Chatter lay completely vandalised and burnt.

The Hefajat activists also attacked Sonar Bangla Express train at Dakshin Poiratola in Brahmanbaria around 10:00am yesterday and injured at least 10 passengers.

They damaged the locomotive, broke 117 windows, and vandalised 15 coaches of the train, said Station Master Shobeb Ahmed.

The hartal supporters put barriers on the tracks and forced Sonar Bangla Express to stop and then attacked it,

he said.

Hefajat supporters set fire to the police lines, the Sadar police station, the office of a local MP, the public library, press club, the homes of the district AL leaders Chowdhury Afzal Hossain Nesar, Rabiul Hossain Rubel, Shahadat Hossain Shobhon, and Sheikh Anar Jamal Khan, the offices of AL leaders Md Zahirul Islam Bhuiyan, Muktijodha Sangsad Bhaban, Ubaidul Muktedir Chowdhury Women's College, and many other establishments.

In Habiganj, around 20 people, including seven cops were injured, in clashes between law enforcers and Hefajat in Jhingri area of Ajmeriganj on Ajmeriganj-Baniachang road. Hefajat activists set fire to two police motorcycles there.

Officer-in-Charge Nurul Islam of Ajmeriganj Police Station was one of the cops injured. The activists also vandalised a pickup used by the OC.

In Munshiganj, 15 people, including the officer-in-charge of Sirajdikhan Police Station, were injured in a clash between police and Hefajat activists.

Abdul Momen, superintendent of police in Munshiganj, said five policemen, including Sirajdikhan OC SM Jamal Uddin, were injured.

Witnesses said the clash ensued as police foiled a blockade of Hefajat activists in Nimtola area on Dhaka-Mawa highway.

The activists attacked policemen in Borshikarpur and Shulpur areas near Nimtola around 12:00pm. Police fired tear gas shells and blank shots.

Hefajat activists threw brick chips at law enforcers. Several shops were damaged and three motorcycles were torched, witnesses said.

Mohammad Obaidullah Kashemi,

president of Sirajdikhan Hefajat-e-Islam, claimed that his father Allama Abdul Hamid got shot during the clash and was taken to a private hospital in Dhaka for treatment.

In Narayanganj, a bystander was injured when Border Guard Bangladesh men opened fire after being attacked by activists near Sanarpar Bus Stand area around 11:00am, reports our correspondent.

Mohammad Shakil, 26, an employee of a furniture store who got shot in his right leg, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

After the incident, locals threw stones and brick chips, damaging at least 10 vehicles on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway where Hefajat activists put barricades, halting traffic.

The activists blocked Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Sylhet highways by setting fire to tyres at different points, disrupting traffic for four hours.

Police and witnesses said stick-wielding Hefajat activists used timber and sand bags and torched tyres at Madanganj, Shimrail, Mouchak and Sanarpar areas to block the highway at 6:00am.

In Kishoreganj, Hefajat supporters marched and clashed sporadically with the police and torched the AL office. Around 50 people, including 10 policemen, were injured.

Hefajat and AL activists engaged in clashes on Station Road, Shaheedi Masjid area, Ekrampur and Atharabari Kachari areas that continued for hours, injuring almost 50 people, said police. Police used teargas shells and fired blank shots to disperse the crowds.

In Sylhet, three Shibir activists were detained during repeated clashes between activists of Hefajat,

Shibir, and AL.

It happened when the AL men were marching against the hartal in Sylhet Zilla Parishad complex and the procession got attacked by the Hefajat and Shibir activists, witnesses said.

Several crude bombs were exploded during the clash, they said. Police also detained two store workers during the clash.

In the capital, Hefajat Secretary-General Nurul Islam told a press conference at Khilafat Majlish office in Purana Paltan that 17 activists got killed, 500 others were injured and 200 arrested.

He demanded compensation for those killed, treatment for the injured, and release of those arrested.

Ninth grader injured in acid attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A ninth-grader was injured in an acid attack in Cox's Bazar's Pekua upazila on Saturday evening, family sources said.

The injured, Mahima Akter, 15, daughter of Kabir Hossain, was rushed to the local upazila health complex, after which she was sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

She suffered severe burn injuries on her face, said Kabir, the victim's father, adding that some masked people threw acid on Mahima through a window while she was watching television inside her house.

Police could not be reached for comments in this regard.

Shun violence or face tough action

FROM PAGE 1
Replying to whether only Hefajat-e-Islam was behind the violence, the minister said, "Their tactics and involvement of Basherakella make it clear that the militant outfits that previously tried to create terror and anarchy has been newly incorporated... We are looking into all the issues. No matter where they are, no one will be spared."

Asked who he meant by militant groups, the home minister said, "You have seen before that there are some banned militant outfits...including the Jamaat-e-Islami."

"When we put it together, we see that the leaders of these militant groups have been leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami before. Harkat-ul-Jihad, Ansar-Ullah Bangla Team, whatever you say, the main leadership of all of these outfits have come from Jamaat-Shibir," said the minister.

He also said, "Why are homes of innocent people burning today and why is government property being ruined? We are guessing that the reason behind this may be the same as those for previous attempts of sabotage. It can be Jamaat-Shibir or the BNP. We are checking all the issues."

About Hefajat's strike yesterday, the minister said vandalism after enforcing hartal (strike) is one issue and observing the hartal after it's enforced is another issue.

"They have no right to vandalism," he said.

A specific reason to create an untoward situation and foil the country's peaceful movement has worked behind setting fires in houses in Brahmanbaria, attacks on police outposts and putting 10-12 year-old children on the streets, said the minister.

"Even the Brahmanbaria press club was set on fire, a journalist was injured

and houses of Chattr League men, Awami League men and the district council chairman were set on fire. If these are not stopped then we will take necessary action," the minister warned.

Asked about taking lawful action against the culprits, he said, "We are observing the situation with patience but now we will foil these efforts and they will be brought to book."

The home boss also said that the situation is being instigated by spreading rumours and videos on social media. "We are treating these as sabotage attempts and stances taken against the state," he said.

"Through you [journalists], we want to ask [people] to refrain from these. We are going to take action according to the law. The government is taking all possible measures so that those who have been affected do not suffer any more. As we are patiently watching, now we must fix the situation, resist [the

culprits] them and bring them under the law," he added.

Hefajat-e-Islam staged a protest at Baitul Mukarram on Friday over the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bangladesh. They clashed with police and ruling party men during the protest.

Soon after the news spread, the students of Hathazari Madrasa in Chittagong staged a protest procession, during which four students were killed. Demonstrations took place in Brahmanbaria on Friday afternoon and one more was killed in a clash with law enforcers.

The Islamist group later called for protests on Saturday and a hartal yesterday over the attacks and killings.

Hefajat leaders and activists have attacked, vandalised and blocked roads across the country during the strike. At least eight people were killed in last two days' violence.