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<http://www.sahasasamay.com/samayhtml/articles.aspx?newsid=97631>

Over 100 injured in B'desh

Posted at Friday, 11 April 2008 21:04 IST

Dhaka, April 11: More than 100 people were injured as thousands of Islamist activists clashed with police on the second consecutive day today while trying to stage a protest here against a government policy to ensure equal rights for women, police and witnesses said.

The clash began soon after Friday's special prayers at the Baitul Mokarram National Mosque in the downtown Dhaka's Purana Paltan area with activists belonging to several Islamic groups attacked policemen with bamboo sticks and stones turning the area into a virtual battleground, they said.



Several platoons of riot police, who were deployed at the scene since morning fearing the violent demonstration, retaliated with tear gas and batons, the witnesses said.

Police arrested a number of protesters while some 50 people including activists, policemen and journalists were seen rushed to hospitals with injuries.

Witnesses, however, said more than 100 people were injured, as police fired more than 100 tear gas canisters, some inside the mosque complex during the three-hour skirmish.

Dozens were injured in similar clashes yesterday.

"They launched a sudden attack pelting stones like monsoon showers forcing us to retaliate with batons and tear gas," a police officer at the scene told newsmen.

Several thousand ordinary Muslims were stranded inside the mosque until the evening as the policemen laid a siege on it while the protesters chanted slogans from inside and took off mosaic stones from its walls to be hurled on police.

The activists belonging to several Islamic groups were protesting against the recently announced national women policy that called for equal property rights for the women in predominantly Muslim Bangladesh.

<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=31858>

Second Day of Protest in Baitul Mukarram Area Violent clashes with cops leave 200 hurt

Shotgun looted by activists found in mosque compound

Staff Correspondent

Saturday, April 12, 2008 11:34 PM GMT+06:00

Hundreds of Islamist activists clashed with police for hours on the second day of violent protests in the city's Baitul Mukarram National Mosque area yesterday, leaving over 200 people injured.

Police used batons and fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to break up demonstrations against the recently announced national women development policy in defiance of the state of emergency.

At least 52 policemen and five journalists were among the injured.

Some 17 people were arrested in connection with the clashes. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mazharul Islam of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Motijheel zone last night said they filed a case accusing over 100 people of assault on police and looting firearms.

An intelligence official requesting not to be named told The Daily Star that they have already identified those inciting violence. "We have suggested that the government take a tough line against them," he added.

Eyewitnesses said violence broke out at around 1:35pm, minutes after Jum'a prayers when police barred a procession coming from the north gate of the mosque. Incensed, the other members of the radical Islamist outfits who were preparing to join the march began throwing projectiles at the law enforcers.



Three members of Islamist outfits beat up a policeman, two with the snatched shotgun and helmet while the other with a bamboo stick, after the cop fell behind his retreating colleagues who chased the agitators near Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday. Photo: STAR

As chase and counter-chase continued for hours, hundreds of those who went to the mosque for Friday prayers became trapped inside.

At around 3:00pm, some demonstrators caught a policeman cut off from his colleagues and beat him up. They snatched his shotgun and broke it up into pieces, said the media cell of DMP.

Earlier, some 50 people were wounded in Thursday's fight between the Islamist groups and law enforcers.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed announced the National Women Development Policy-2008 on March 8, causing a firestorm of protests among Islamist organisations.

Since then, some radical groups have been claiming that the policy gives equal inheritance rights to men and women, while the government maintained there is no such provision.

In efforts to scotch the discontent, four advisers of the caretaker government on March 27 met Islamic leaders and formed a review committee headed by the acting Khatib of Baitul Mukarram Mosque.

A report by the committee is due by April 16. But some Islamic groups including Ahkam-e-Shariah Hifajat led by Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee, Anti-Quran Law Resistance Committee of Allama Azizul Huq Shaikhul Hadith, Islamic Law Implementation Committee led by Islami Oikya Jote's Fazlul Huq Amini and Chhatra Jamiat Andolon of Maulana Muhiuddin Ahmed opted not to wait and launched violent street agitation Thursday.

A huge number of students from madrasas across the city took part in the pitched battles with police yesterday. They acted on instructions from their teachers who were staying inside the mosque, said the eyewitnesses.

After around four hours of fighting, areas like Purana Paltan, Dainik Bangla intersection, Bangabandhu Avenue, Gulistan and national stadium were littered with brickbats as smog from tear gas hung heavily over them.

The agitators launched attacks on the police from every corner of Baitul Mukarram and took shelter inside whenever police went on a counter-offensive. They took bricks off under-construction structures on the mosque premises and split those into pieces to hurl at police.

Around 1,500 law enforcers in riot gear struggled all along to control the crowds.

At one stage, rumours spread that three of the protesters were killed, adding fuel to the agitation.

To escape tear gas, both the law enforces and agitators burned carpets of the mosque, woods, furniture of several street side stalls and papers making the air heavier and adding to the sufferings.

The marchers chanted slogans demanding resignation of Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury and the interim government.

The injured policemen were admitted to Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital while journalists, pedestrians and protesters received treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and various private medical facilities.

DMCH sources said 22 madrasa students were admitted there.

Monirul Islam and Hasan Raja of Prothom Alo, Abu Taher Khokon of New Age, and Belal Hossain of Ekushey TV--all photographers--were badly injured.

Of the policemen wounded, condition of inspector Selimuzzaman, Sergeant Israfil, Sub-Inspector Kamrul, and constables Belayet, Enamul, Emdad, Kamrul, Monir, Kabir, Shafique, and Sarwar was stated critical, according to the DMP media cell.

An official of the cell told The Daily Star last night that during the clashes, police shot 312 tear gas shells and 243 rounds of rubber bullets.

DMP (Motijheel) DC Mazharul Islam said, "They attacked first, forcing us to retaliate with baton-charge and tear gas."

He said at least 35 platoons were engaged to disperse the agitators till 3:30pm.

Meanwhile, Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Fazlul Haque Amini at a press conference at Purana Paltan in the afternoon alleged that police attacked them without provocation.

He claimed that more than 100 of their workers were injured in the clashes.

"We called a rally to drum up support for the anti-Quran rules," he added.

Amini also said, "If our demands are not met, the fire ignited today [yesterday] will spread like wildfire across the country."

Asked about mosaic stones taken off the mosque's wall, he said he was not aware of it.

http://www.thedailystar.net/pf_story.php?nid=31873

Madrasa students go on rampage, storm Hathazari police station

Our Correspondent, Ctg

Saturday, April 12, 2008 11:32 PM GMT+06:00

Hundreds of madrasa students went on the rampage and stormed Hathazari Police Station in Chittagong yesterday over rumours that an imam was killed earlier in the day in clashes between police and religious militants in Dhaka.

Clashes that followed left more than 10 people, including five police, injured.

Police said students of Darul Ulum Moin Ul Islam, a local religious institution, brought out a procession at about 6:30pm protesting police action on the activists of Anti-Quranic Law Resistance Committee in Dhaka.

The procession became unruly while passing by the Hathazari Police Station as rumours spread that an imam was killed in clashes between police and religious militants in Dhaka earlier in the day.

They began raining stones on the police station.

The madrasa students later forced into the police station, ransacked all its rooms, set the doors and windows on fire, disabled telecommunications facilities and damaged four vehicles parked inside, witnesses said.

They also attacked the adjoining police barracks and torched a motorcycle there.

A police officer said the militants entered the police station all on a sudden, giving them no room to put up any resistance.

Reinforced police later baton-charged the unruly students and lobbed tear-gas canisters in a bid to disperse them.

Five cops and the imam of police station mosque were injured in the clashes. They are Sub-Inspector Mizanur Rahman, constables Abdul Haq, Bahar Uddin, Mostafa and Hamid and mosque imam Abdul Kalam.

The injured were admitted to local hospital.

The madrasa students later put up barricades on Hathazari road. According to the latest news, the militants took position on the madrasa rooftops.

Deputy Inspector General of Police of Chittagong Range Shahidul Haq and other high officials rushed to the spot.

<http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/news/news.php?article=14161>

Bangladesh: Second day of protest in Baitul Mukarram area

12-04-2008

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people injured.

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At least 52 policemen and five journalists were among the injured.

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<http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=31870>

Saturday, April 12, 2008 11:35 PM GMT+06:00

Call for calm, solving crisis thru' talks

Staff Correspondent

In reaction to yesterday's violent clashes between irate Islamists and police over the country's new women's development policy, members of the civil society and human rights activists called upon all to maintain peace.

They also wondered aloud why the khatib of National Mosque was not issued a show cause notice.

Questions were also raised regarding how and why bamboo poles and brickbats were kept in Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, and if some quarters were trying to take advantage of the situation to divert public attention from more crucial national issues.

Around 200 people, including 52 police personnel, were injured in clashes between the law enforcers and mostly Muslim men incited by Islamist obscurantist organisations who had been protesting the Women Development Policy 2008, which envisages equal rights for women in the country.

Workers of Khelafat Majlish, a militant Islamist organisation that wants to establish Islamist rule in the country, clashed with police in the capital over the same issue on Thursday, leaving around 50 people injured.

The protesters say the new women's development policy is anti-Quran, although the government earlier announced that it will not keep any provision in the policy that goes against the holiest book of Islam. It even formed a high-powered committee on March 27 comprising eminent Islamic scholars to review the new policy.

Acting Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Mufti Mohammad Nuruddin was also made the convener of the committee, which is scheduled to submit its report within 21 days, recommending changes and amendments to the policy.

The deadline for the review committee's submission of recommendations is April 16.

Asked what could be the reasons for such violent agitations by Muslim men backed by organised Islamist forces, eminent educationist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said, "There might be different motives behind such demonstrations."

The fundamentalist forces are being identified through the violent incidents, and their supporters might try to take advantage of the murky situation in an effort to divert public attention from more important national issues, he commented.

"Keeping a stock of brickbats and bamboo sticks in the mosque proves that they were prepared for the clashes. The khatib of the National Mosque should be issued a show cause notice," Prof Muzaffer said.

He said people should read the new women's development policy first before jumping into protests. The policy does not address the issue of women's inheritance rights, he added.

"The policy says women's right to retain their earned properties will be ensured," said Muzaffer, also president of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik, a public policy think tank. The Quran does not deprive women of their rights to earned properties, he noted.

Calling upon all to maintain peace and discipline, Regulatory Reforms Commission Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan said every problem can be solved through dialogues.

"We are in favour of peace, not conflicts and violence," he said.

Asked if there might be ulterior motives behind such violent agitations incited by Islamist organisations, human rights activist Dr Hameeda Hossain said it might very well be so.

She said she does not see any logic in forming a review committee after the policy was approved by the council of advisers to the military backed caretaker government.

Earlier, various other women and human rights activists also protested the formation of the review committee.