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BCL men attack CPB-BSD rally in Sylhet

Selim among 35 hurt; two parties call 6-hour hartal in Sylhet today

STAR REPORT

Chhatra League activists attacked a joint rally of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) in Sylhet city yesterday, injuring at least 35, including CPB chief Mujahidul Islam Selim and 10 policemen.

In protest, the two left-leaning parties called a six-hour hartal to be enforced today from 6:00am in the north-eastern city. The main opposition extended its support to the hartal, BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told The Daily Star by phone.

Responding to the attack in Sylhet, the CPB in Dhaka brought out a procession from its central office and vandalised at least 10 vehicles at Paltan intersection. The party activists took away small tables and benches used by road



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BCL men attack

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side booksellers and torched those in front of the office.

Police drove them away around 7:30pm.

Selim, who got his left hand fractured, underwent treatment at a private clinic in Sylhet, said Bedananda Bhattacharya, president of Sylhet district CPB.

Activists of the BCL, a student body associated with the ruling Awami League, also clashed with law enforcers when they tried to bring the situation under control.

Around 250 people participated in the divisional meeting of the two parties in Court Point area of Sylhet, reported our Sylhet correspondent.

About an hour into the meeting, which began around 3:30pm, some 150 BCL men came marching from Registry Maidan that is half a kilometre from Court Point. That led to panic among the participants of the rally.

The BCL had a pre-scheduled procession on the occasion of the Prime Minister's arrival in Sylhet.

Sylhet district BCL acting president Hiron Mahmud said that when

they were passing by Court Point they heard objectionable remarks about Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the government. A section of the BCL men then went towards the rally to protest.

The participants in the rally were about to go on a break for Asr prayers at that time, Bedananda Bhattacharya told The Daily Star.

The BCL men grabbed chairs at the rally venue and threw those at the CPB and BSD leaders and activists. They also vandalised the podium. Members of police and the Rapid Action Battalion watched the whole thing happen for about 20 minutes, standing 30-40 yards away near Hasan Market where they were posted.

The attack left injured 25 of the two parties, including CPB President Selim, CPB's Sylhet unit secretary Anwar Hossain Suman and Bangladesh Chhatra Union district unit secretary Shahiduzzaman Paplu.

As the rally resumed half an hour after the incident, another group of BCL men marching from Tilagor area attacked the gathering again, said witnesses.

Rab and police members this time swung into action, triggering a chase and counter chase for 20 minutes at Court Point and Hasan Market areas.

The law enforcers fired rubber bullets and tear shells to bring the situation under control.

SM Rokon Uddin, additional commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP), said that at least 10 policemen, including the officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, had been injured.

More than 30 rubber bullets were fired to quell the violence, said Mohammad Ayub, additional deputy commissioner of SMP.

After 5:30pm when the situation was under control, the CPB and BSD activists resumed the meeting.

Later, Sylhet district BCL was dissolved because its members were found involved in the incident, said Siddique Nazmul Alam, general secretary of central committee of the BCL.

Meanwhile, the main opposition BNP has condemned the attack.