

SHAHBAGH PROTESTS

Call for strike in edn instts April 9

Staff Correspondent

THE Shahbagh protests on Saturday announced fresh programmes, including a strike in educational institutions and a sit-in in front of the law ministry, to push for their demands including a death penalty for all war criminals and a ban on Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir.

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Blogger Imran H Sarker, at a rally in the Shahbagh crossing in the evening announced the programmes.

He said that they would hold a procession, carrying the national flag, at 11:00am on Monday to resist the dawn-to-dusk general strike Hefajat-e-Islam called for the day.

The Islamist group Hefajat announced the strike and a series of rallies in April 11-30 at a rally at Motijheel after a long march to Dhaka to push for its 13-point demands that, among other issues, include the reinstatement of the phrase 'absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah' in the preamble to the constitution, the enactment of a blasphemy law provisioning for death penalty as the highest punishment and an end to anti-Islamic campaigns through blogging and punishment of such bloggers.

Shahbagh protesters called a strike in all educational institutions for April 9 but the Higher Secondary Certificate exams will remain out of the purview of the strike.

They will hold a sit-in in front of the law ministry at 11:00am on April 10 and hold a rally at Shahbagh on April 14.

Shahbagh protesters be-

gan the rally about 4:00pm after their 22-hour blockade of roads, railway and waterway beginning Friday evening to resist Hefajat long march and rally at Motijheel in Dhaka on Saturday.

Imran at the rally said that the government had 'sided with Hefajat shamelessly.' The government was asleep when law enforcers, media people and Shahbagh protesters faced attacks, he added.

He urged all to stand united against forces that had acted against the country's independence in 1971.

The Chhatra Maitree president, Bappaditya Basu, the Samajtantrik Chhatra Front president, Saifuzzaman Shakon, the Chhatra Federation president, Prabir Saha, the Students Union general secretary, Hasan Tarec, the JSD-backed Chhatra League general secretary Shamsul Haque, the Biplabi Chhatra Maitree president, Abdur Rauf, and the Chhatra Oikya Forum convener, Sohan Sobhan, also addressed the rally.

Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee leader Shahriyar Kabir, Dhaka University teacher Mesbah Kamal also spoke.

Tension ran high as a clash broke out between Hefajat-e-Islam activists

and Shahbagh protesters near Matsya Bhaban about 5:15pm.

Witnesses said that when Hefajat people were returning from the rally at Motijheel, several hundred of them tried to march towards the Shahbagh crossing, resulting in chases between both the groups.

Imran alleged that Hefajat activists, along with Jamaat and Shibir men, had tried to attack the Shahbagh protest venue but students and people had resisted them.

Hefajat-e-Islam activists broke a temporary platform Shahbagh protesters set up at Amtoli under the Mohakhali flyover in the capital and damaged the chairs.

Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee leader Shahriyar Kabir was addressing a rally in the place about 10:15am when Hefajat-e-Islam activists, who were passing by, attacked.

Shahriyar Kabir said that at least 20 people had been injured in the attack.

Shahbagh protesters brought but several processions against Hefajat-e-Islam's march.

The protests at Shahbagh broke out February 5 after International Crimes Tribunal 2 sentenced Jamaat's assistant general secretary Abdul Quader Molla to life in prison.