

Bangabandhu's portrait act repealed, AL protests in JS

PM airs idea of alternative act displaying portraits of both Mujib, Zia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad last night scrapped the act for preservation and display of portraits of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman amid boisterous protests by opposition Awami League lawmakers outside the House.

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Khaleda Zia however in her concluding speech, after the repeal of the act proposed enactment of another provision for display of the portraits of architect of the country Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with that of the head of the elected government.

The prime minister also urged the AL to join parliament and discuss her proposal. "I want to end once for all the controversy about the national leaders Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman," she told the House.

The Preservation and Display of Portrait of the Father of the Nation (Repeal) Bill 2002 was passed at 9:10pm. On January 18 last year

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PHOTO: STAR

Awami League leaders demonstrate and waive black flags at the entrance to the parliament building as the government passed a law to remove the portrait of Bangabandhu from government offices yesterday.

Crackdown on AL rally in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday cracked down on leaders and activists of the Awami League and clubbed and teargassed a rally scheduled to protest a move by the government to remove the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from government offices.

Police swung into action as AL workers gathered in front of its Bangabandhu Avenue central office and exploded a cracker after they were driven away from Muktangan, where the rally was supposed to be held.

Yet again at about 7.45pm, police launched another bout of clubbing on the AL activists who demonstrated in front of Pir Yemeni Market after the portrait repeal bill was tabled in the parliament. The incident sent a wave of panic among the shopkeepers in the area and they shuttered their shops. About ten people were arrested.

Police clubbing left about ten BCL leaders injured; one of them was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. As panic-stricken workers ran for cover inside the AL office, police fired teargas shells at it in a bid to confine them within.

Processions coming from different parts of the city to Muktangan

were also intercepted in the afternoon. Police cordoned off the rally venue.

Dhaka City Corporation Mayor and city AL President Mohammad Hanif, who went to the rally venue at about 3:30pm in a jeep escorted by police, was not allowed to hold the rally.

Hanif showed police the permission for the rally, but they did not listen to him. On-duty police personnel told him that the higher authorities instructed them not to allow anyone to hold any rally or procession at the venue.

The Call Ready mike service went to Muktangan to set up microphones for the rally at about 12 noon, but was forced to leave the venue, sources said.

Police announced through microphones that there would be no rally or procession and asked AL activists not to assemble.

The incident over, Mayor Hanif held a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday and blasted the government for its crackdown on the AL leaders and activists.

The AL was permitted to use microphones and hold a rally at Muktangan, but "we were barred from staging the rally", he told reporters.

Let's end controversy once for all: Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

In a major political move, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia last night proposed in parliament display of portraits of national leaders Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman along with elected heads of government.

"I want to end once for all the controversy over the national leaders Sheikh Mujib and Ziaur Rahman," she told the house immediately after the passage of a bill

providing for removal of portrait of Bangabandhu from government offices.

Making the proposal amidst cheers and thumping of desk by treasury bench members, the prime minister said, "If necessary, a law will be enacted and I want to free the nation from being divided. Let the controversy end once for all."

She invited opposition Awami League to take part in the discussion on her proposal, discarding "negative politics."

"Let us move forward, not stick to the past," she said pointing at the Awami League.

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List those who demean Bangabandhu: Hasina

UNB, Bagerhat

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the people to prepare a list of those who would undermine independence by disgracing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"Let them identify and make a list of those who would disgrace the father of the nation . . . we will give them a befitting reply at an appropriate time," she told a workers meeting of her party at the local Circuit House.

Hasina said she and her MPs will go to parliament for a day prior to resignation to put on record repression, torture, corruption and plundering of economy by the BNP.

Jamaat government and its five and a half month's misrule and abuse of power.

She said she has already asked her party MPs to collect the stories of how the alliance government has been engaged in corruption, loot and terrorism since assumption of power and narrate them in parliament where AL would go for a day.

"We will tender our resignation and return to the people," she said and urged the people to get ready for a movement for restoration of democracy and people's unfettered right to vote.

Accusing Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of waging a war against people by letting loose "her armed

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Media men harassed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists and television crew faced unprecedented obstructions when they tried to enter the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday noon. Newsmen and press photographers who frequent the parliament were surprised at the obstruction by security personnel, who also allegedly harassed them at the main entrance to the parliament building.

They showed "special passes" issued by the parliament authorities but the security men said the passes were not acceptable today. No prior notice was issued in this regard, though.

When asked for the reason, the security men allegedly shouted at the newsmen and asked them not to

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PHOTO: STAR

A policeman snatches a banner from the Awami League activists yesterday when they tried to gather at Muktangan in protest against a government move to remove the portrait of Bangabandhu from government establishments.

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Police turn blind eye to criminals in DCC fray

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police administration closed its eye to the listed and identified criminals, who appeared in person at the deputy commissioner's (DC) office Wednesday in the city's Segunbagicha area to file nomination for the upcoming Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) elections.

Residents of different areas said some of these criminals are also openly campaigning for votes and holding meetings with their followers.

Several leading news dailies have already carried extensive reports with photographs identifying the criminals. However, the police appear unmoved.

When contacted last night, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) said that they had not received any instruction in this regard.

Out of the 1,026 nomination papers filed for 90 DCC wards on Wednesday, more than 270 were for listed and

identified criminals, who, according to police, could not be arrested because they had gone into hiding.

Most of them led separate procession to the DC office and filed their nomination in the presence of law enforcement and intelligence personnel. Others, who filed their nomination papers through their representatives, were also seen in the area.

Of the criminal commissioner-aspirants, 12 are top terrorists and four listed among the 23 most wanted.

According to sources, intelligence agencies and police have prepared several lists of top criminals of the city and successive governments have declared rewards for their arrest.

However, these criminals, accused in multiple criminal cases including murders, mugging, extortion, bank robbery, abduction, etc, remain at large.

With these 'listed or identified' criminals carrying on

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Caught in the act

UNB, Dhaka

Post and Telecommunications Minister Barrister M Aminul Huq yesterday caught a T&T employee in the act of taking bribe from a woman.

The minister, who made a surprise visit to the Gulistan Telephone Exchange, found STO Abul Khair bargaining with the woman over the amount of bribe to issue the demand note for a phone, said an eyewitness.

The employee was suspended immediately after Barrister Huq asked the higher authorities of the T&T Board to take action against him.

The lady informed the minister that she had already paid Tk 1,500

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3 including top terrorist killed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three persons including an alleged terrorist with a number of cases against him were murdered in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Sohel alias Pichchi Soheli, 28, who was an accused in eight cases for terrorist activities in Tejgaon area, was shot by a gang of three unidentified elements at Manik Mia Avenue at Sher-e Bangla Nagar in the afternoon. The gang fled the spot immediately.

Tejgaon police recovered a pistol loaded with six cartridges and tied with his (Sohel) waist. They rushed him to Suhrawardi Hospital where doctors declared him dead. His body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Police said Soheli was a terror in the area and some of the cases against him were filed under the explosives act and the Special Power Act.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

In another incident, Ruhul Amin, 35, a leather trader was shot dead by five unidentified persons at Hazaribagh in the early hours of yesterday.

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IO ordered to produce Alamgir on end of remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The chief metropolitan magistrate's court, Dhaka, yesterday ordered that former state minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir be produced before it on expiry of a two-day remand.

The court directed the investigation officer (IO) of the case against Alamgir to take steps to produce him (Alamgir) before it on expiry of the remand.

The court also asked the defence lawyers to go to the District Magistrate, Dhaka, for seeking division for Alamgir in the jail cus

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Finally go the girders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another six girders were removed yesterday from the under-construction footbridge at Science Laboratory intersection in the city.

With these, eight girders out of the eleven have so far been brought down from the footbridge by its builder Surma International.

The company will remove the rest three girders today, according to sources.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) was scheduled to start removing a huge girder from the under-construction footbridge at Baridhara at 11.30 last night.

The DCC has brought four cranes from Chittagong to remove girders from all under-construction footbridges in the city.

The girder on the footbridge at Uttara Rajlakhmi point is likely to be removed tonight.

The government ordered the

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