

Repeal of portrait act condemned

UNB, Dhaka

Different political and cultural organisations yesterday condemned the repeal of the act for preservation and display of the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at government establishments.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Workers Party have protested the repeal of the act by the BNP-Jamaat coalition government.

CPB President Monzurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim in a statement said the contribution of Bangabandhu to the War of Independence could not be erased from the history of Bangladesh by repealing the law.

"It needs to recognise the contribution of all, including Bangabandhu, Maulana Bhasani, Moni Singh, Zia and Taher, in the history," they said in the statement.

"People are the main heroes of liberation war. Chaining them to poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, terrorism and imperialism, the government is creating political instability in the country," the statement added.

They also warned the government of dire consequences for the police attacks on the peaceful procession and rally.

In another statement, Workers Party president Rashed Khan Menon said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's proposal for hanging the portraits of the head of the government alongside the national leaders' will give permanence to the politics of division instead of unity.

"Efforts to elevate Ziaur Rahman

to the same status of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is denial of the history and people would not accept it," said the left-leaning leader.

Maulana Bhasani has also been denied in the Prime Minister's proposal, he said adding that the nation has been encased in the politics of portrait, shelving the main problems of the common people.

Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote held a meeting at its office with its joint convenor Wahiduzzaman Moti in the chair, protesting the repeal of the act.

Cultural activists of Bangladesh Chalochchitra League, Awami Sangskritik Jote, Awami Tarun League, Aamra Mujib Sena, Bangabandhu Shishu Kishore Mela, Jatiya Hindu Moitri Parishad, Samilito Shilpi Parisad and Muktioddha Shilpi Parisad spoke at the meeting.

The speakers said the government has taken the side of the defeated forces of 1971 and rewarded the killers, said a press release.

The name of Bangabandhu can never be erased from the heart of the people, rather Bangabandhu will remain forever in the heart of all Bangladeshis, they said.

Meanwhile, some 250 eminent personalities, cultural activists and leaders of Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote in a statement have condemned the government for repealing the father of the nation portrait display and preservation act.

The signatories include Justice KM Sobhan, Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Asaduzzaman Noor MP, Ali Zaker, Sara Zaker, Kabori Sarwar, film star Razzak, Farooq and Diti.

4 injured in cracker explosion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four persons including a mother and her two sons received burn injuries in a cracker explosion at their South Jatrabari residence in the city yesterday noon.

The incident happened at around 1:30pm yesterday when Zahidul Islam, 8, and Saiful Islam, 6, son of Abdur Rashid, took home a tobacco container they found near a dustbin close to their house and started playing with it.

At one stage, the container exploded injuring the two brothers, their mother and another minor boy.

The injured were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The minor boy was released from the hospital after first aid.

Mild tremor in Ctg

BSS, Dhaka

A mild tremor measuring 3.6 in the Richter scale jolted the Chittagong port city yesterday morning, Bangladesh Meteorological Department sources said.

The earthquake began at 8.16 am and lasted 16 seconds. No report of casualties and damages were, however, reported.

3 months over

FROM PAGE 12

istration with the motive of using them for 'political gains,' badly affecting their efficiency as law enforcers. They were not sincere about punishing the criminals but simply blamed police for 'failure' to take action against them," one official said.

Meanwhile, more than 270 'listed and identified criminals' are among the 1026 aspirants who filed nomination papers for the April 25 electoral race for the posts of ward commissioner of Dhaka City Corporation. Police said they could not be arrested because 'they have gone into hiding.'

But most of them were seen leading separate processions to the returning officer's office on Wednesday to file their nomination papers. The others who filed nomination papers through their representatives were also seen moving openly in their respective areas.

Of the criminals who are commissioner aspirants, four are among the 23 most wanted ones and 12 are notorious terrorists. The four are Titon of Rayerbazar, Abbas alias Killer Abbas of Kafurl, Md Alauddin of Tejaagang areas and Shamim Ahmed alias Aga Shamim of old Dhaka.

Road accidents

FROM PAGE 1

Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy. The injured were also sent to the DMCH.

A case was filed with Motijheel Police Station in this regard but the driver could not be arrested till last night.

Our correspondent from Cox's Bazaar adds: Four people were killed and 30 others injured when a speeding bus rammed into a roadside market in Ramu upazila.

Police sources said the driver of the Cox's Bazaar bound Borak chair coach (Dhaka Metro Ba-14-0064) lost control of the bus as the vehicle's brakes failed, and drove it straight into the bazaar, killing four people and injuring at least 30 others.

The dead were identified as Abdul Karim, 25, Rashid Ahmed, 32, Mohammad Khaleq, 27, and Hafez Ahmed. The bodies were sent to the morgue for autopsy.

The injured were admitted to Cox's Bazaar Sadar Hospital, Ramu Health Complex and Dulahazara Hospital. Among them, the condition of Farid Ahmed, 21, and Abdul Hakim, 42, who were admitted to the Cox's Bazaar Sadar Hospital, is stated to be critical.

The driver of the coach managed to escape. Ramu thana police visited the spot.

3 jawans killed

FROM PAGE 1

Z R M Ashraf Uddin is now undergoing treatment at a Dakar hospital.

Arrangements are being made to send the bodies to Bangladesh by the Forces Headquarters of UNAMSIL at Sierra Leone, the release added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday condoned the death of four army personnel in a road accident at Sierra Leone on Thursday.

In a message of condolence, Khaleda expressed her deep shock at the death of the peacekeepers, who were working under the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

She also prayed for early recovery of another official who was critically injured in the accident.

The prime minister conveyed her deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved families and prayed for eternal peace of the departed souls.

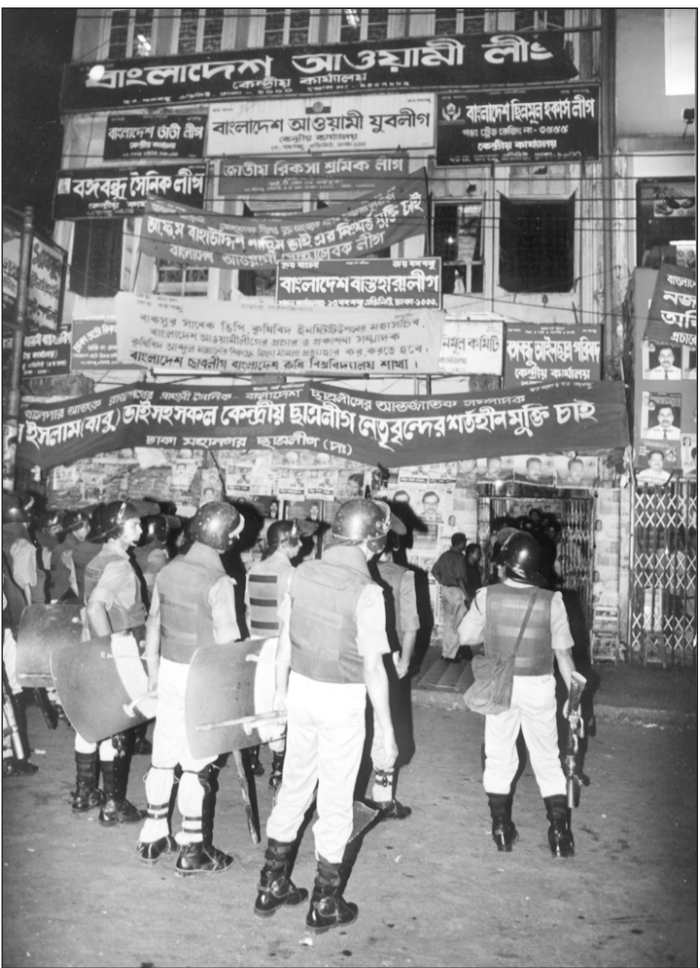


PHOTO: STAR

Riot police on guard in front of Awami League central office at Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday in a bid to crack down on any procession or rally .

First round of ME truce talks ends without accord

AP, Jerusalem

A round of Mideast truce talks ended without agreement yesterday, hours after a Palestinian man blew himself up at an Israeli military checkpoint in the West Bank, killing himself and wounding an Israeli officer in the third suicide bombing in three days.

The Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, a militia linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Israeli military said the bomber had intended to blow himself up in Israel, but detonated the explosives prematurely when he was unexpectedly stopped by soldiers at a surprise checkpoint and was asked to lift his shirt during a search.

The assailant had been riding in a van with two other men, who fled after the explosion, said Brig. Gen. Gershon Yitzhak, commander of forces in the West Bank.

Suicide bombings on

Wednesday and Thursday were carried out by the militant Islamic Jihad and by the Al Aqsa militia, respectively. In all, 10 Israelis were killed and dozens wounded in those attacks.

Despite the violence, another round of truce talks was held yesterday. The session lasted more than three hours. Yarden Vatikay, an adviser to Israeli Defense Minister Benjamin ben-Eliezer, said no agreement was reached on a timetable for implementing a cease-fire plan brokered last year by CIA director George Tenet. Each side wants the other to take the first steps toward a truce.

Palestinian participants were not immediately available for comment, but both sides have said more sessions would be held.

Earlier yesterday U.S. mediator Anthony Zinni met Arafat and delivered a stern message, saying the Palestinian leader had not done

Hazari's movable property attached

UNB, Feni

Police attached movable property from Awami League leader Jinal Abedin Hazari's Mastarpapa residence here yesterday.

Witnesses said a contingent of police led by a magistrate confiscated the goods acting on a court order as the fugitive Al leader was wanted in a number of cases under the Special Powers Act and Arms Act.

Hazari has remained absconding since August 17 last year when a joint team of Army, BDR and police made an abortive attempt to arrest him.

Police seized the property from his well-known "Shoila Kuthir" residence at Mastarpapa in a daylong drive in presence of his sister, Khodeza Begum, and cousin, Rafiq Hazari.

The confiscated items included a private car, three motorcycles, refrigerator, sofa, air cooler, computer, telephones, washing machine, bookshelf, VCR, VCP, TV and generator.

A close relative of Hazari claimed that the goods were valued at about Tk50 lakh.

Police said they would take possession of the goods of a gymnasium owned by Hazari today.

RSS takes tough line against Christians

AP, Bangalore

After asking Muslims to earn the goodwill of Hindus, the ideological group for India's main governing party yesterday adopted a tough stance toward another minority community: Christians.

During a meeting with Christian leaders, KS Sudarshan, chief of the Hindu-nationalist Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or National Volunteers Corps, said Christians should not accept money from abroad and stop converting people to their faith.

"We are not against Christians propagating the message of their faith, but we are against conversions," Sudarshan told reporters in Bangalore, the capital of southern Karnataka state.

"Why do you bring money from Western countries?" Sudarshan said. "We should be nationalists. Indian churches should be run by the Indians who are loyal to this country. Unfortunately, there is a section guided by foreign missionaries. This leads to conflict."

The tough RSS line comes as tensions between Hindus and Muslims have mounted in India, following widespread violence in western Gujarat state which has claimed at least 725 lives, mostly

Muslims.

Muslims constitute nearly 14 per cent, and Christians 2 per cent, of India's 1 billion-plus people, most of whom are Hindus.

The RSS is the parent organization of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party.

The two sides began meeting two years ago in the wake of an upsurge in attacks on Christians after Vajpayee assumed power in 1999.

Christians blamed the attacks on the Bajrang Dal, a group affiliated to Vajpayee's BJP. The Dal accused Christians of luring poor Hindus to convert to their faith by offering money.

On Friday, Ken Gnanakan, a Christian leader who attended the meeting with RSS leaders, rejected the Hindu organization's charge and said the question of faith should be left to individuals.

Gnanakan expressed concern at a resolution adopted by the RSS over the weekend claiming the safety of Muslims depended on winning the "goodwill" of Hindus.

"We would like to understand a little bit more about the RSS ideology of reuniting and rejuvenating the Hindus of this country," he said. "Given this scenario, where do we, minorities fit in?"

AL rejects proposal

FROM PAGE 1

nation's glorious history. Samad Azad told newsmen after the meeting.

"We will announce tough movement programme reflecting people's expectation," he said but declined to give details. He refused to make any comment when asked whether the party would go for hartal.

"Passage of repeal bill is another assault on the independence of the country. This day (March 21) will be as a black day in history."

"Bangladesh has Father of the Nation and no play to create any parallel to him will ever succeed."

Asked about any possibility of reconciliation between the ruling alliance and the main opposition party AL, Samad Azad said that despite repeated requests, BNP leaders declined to withdraw the bill on Thursday.

"We even urged them to adjourn the session to discuss. But they did not comply with our request. There

are precedents of adjournment of parliament sessions."

Commenting on Khaleda Zia's proposal, Suranjit Sengupta said, "Oil and water can't mix up. A nation can have one father. Fatherhood can't be shared. We'll go by history. None should distort history. Zia was a sector commander during the War of Liberation and there is no question about that."

"If the government bars us from staging tomorrow's mass hunger strike, we will go for hard programmes."

Mentionably, AL had earlier decided in principle to resign from parliament in protest against the government's "misrule" and its move to remove the portrait of the Father of the Nation from government offices.

As party chief Sheikh Hasina is out of the city, other party leaders could not say when they are going to implement the decision.

The presidium meeting was held at AL's Dhanmondi office with Abdus Samad Azad in the chair.

Fantasy Kingdom

FROM PAGE 12

Festival Plaza, hotels, motels, resorts, restaurants, cyber café, shopping mall and Prince Ashu's Exclusive Club.

Welcoming the guests, S M Kamaluddin, Chairman of Concord Group, said, the basic concept behind the Fantasy Kingdom is to take the visitors to a different world, away from the busy city life. This is the first world class Theme Park in Bangladesh, he said.

The park beside the Dhaka-Tangail highway was built in eight months.

At the park, Prince Ashu and Princess Lia will welcome the visitors at the gate.

"The main objective of building the park is to give the city dwellers some relief from the polluted and congested city life," Kamaluddin said.

"Entertainment is also a basic demand, which is neglected in our society. Fantasy Kingdom will meet the demand to a great extent."

Lack of entertainment facilities in the country is one of the reasons for degeneration in society, he said.

Khurshid Jahan, Minister for Women and Children Affairs and local member of parliament Dr Dewan Md Salauddin were among others present at the ceremony.

Kamaluddin also declared every Tuesday from next month as 'family day' when entrance and three rides will be free for children.

Arab League warns Israel will 'pay consequences' if Arafat not allowed to return home

AP, Cairo

Israel will "pay the consequences" if it refuses to allow Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to return home from an Arab summit next week in Lebanon, the head of the Arab League warned.

Israel has restricted Arafat's travel for months, but Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon offered Tuesday to lift the ban so Arafat could attend the Arab summit if a truce takes hold. Sharon also indicated, however, that Israel might not let him return if there are terror attacks while he is abroad. Several Israeli ministers have proposed he not be allowed back.

Businessman shot dead by extortionists in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed extortionists shot dead a businessman in the city's Mohammadpur area last night.

Abul Hossain, 35, who had a shop at Sir Salimullah Road at Mohammadpur, was attacked on his refusal to pay the money the extortionists demanded from him.

The on-duty doctors at Suhrawardy Hospital declared him dead on arrival at 9.30pm.



PHOTO: STAR

Police intercepting activists of Islami Shasantantra Andolon during demonstration against blasphemous comments on the Quran and the Hadith allegedly by the owner of Hotel Al Qadr in Khulna city yesterday.

Befitting reply

FROM PAGE 12

rders and rapes since BNPJamaat 'grabbed power through massive polls rigging with the help of a partisan caretaker government'.

She warned of a massive movement if the government does not stop "repression" on Awami League leaders and workers and nab terrorists to ensure security of people's life and property.

Pro-liberation forces are being subjected to political repression and revenge by BNP- Jamaat activists and are being made victims of "false sedition charges". They are engaged in an Awami League cleansing drive, she alleged.

BNP was born in the cantonment and is now being backed by anti-democratic forces. "Khaleda Zia must know history repeats itself and will never forgive a tyrant like her who does not have the minimum idea what democracy actually means", Hasina said.

Presided over by Khulna city AL President Manjurul Imam, the public meeting was addressed by, among others, former agriculture minister Matia Chowdhury, former state ministers Abul Hassain Chowdhury and Talukder Abdul Khaleque MP, former Whip Mostafa Rashidi Shuja, Faruk Khan MP and Khulna district AL President Shaikh Haroon-or-Rashid.

The former prime minister said the country is now being ruled at the instructions of those who are controlling 'Hawa Bahban' (a BNP office in Dhaka city).

"There is no power in the country to annihilate Awami League. Rather, you prepare a list of those who are trying to disgrace the father of the nation".

She called for building movement event at ward and union levels to resist BNP-Jamaat.

She also asked her party men to

CPA staff drowns in Karnaphuli

BSS, Ctg

Police yesterday recovered the body of a staff of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) from the port channel area.

CPA and police sources said Mohammad Nasir, 30, a staff of the cargo vessel Jharna-1, drowned in the river Karnaphuli near jetty gate no-1 last night when he along with his colleagues were supplying drinking water to the other vessels awaiting at the port channel and outer anchorage.

The body was sent to morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with Bandar thana in this regard.

Hasina: Portrait

FROM PAGE 1

premises.

"But, before our resignation, we will go to the parliament and tell what is going on in the country. We will give statement about the misdeeds, corruption, nepotism and terrorism committed by the ruling party," she added.

Hasina said what is the benefit of going to the parliament retaining the membership, as there is no democratic practice in the parliament or in the country. She said the ruling party has undertaken a mission to eliminate Awami League through torture and terrorism. "It is better to resign."

"Is there any democracy in the country? She questioned saying that there is no freedom of judiciary, expression and protest. Even the government did not allow the opposition to protest on the street," she said.

Replying to a question about the country's prevailing law and order situation, the opposition leader said it is the responsibility of the state to ensure security of the people.

"But where the people will go when the state mechanism protects the terrorists," encourages the terrorists," she questioned adding that nobody is safe under the rule of this present BNP-Jamaat government which is "patronising the terrorists."

Not only the journalists, but also other professionals and also the opposition workers, are becoming the victims of massive torture and repression. Everybody has been suffering from insecurity, she said mentioning the assassination of

BCL activist

FROM PAGE 12

Witnesses said some JCD activists swooped on the BCL activists at Mohanganj Bazaar at about 7 pm during the attack. They also ransacked ten shops in the bazaar.

During the attack, they also ransacked ten shops in the bazaar.

Baki Khan, as activist of BCL Mohanganj upazila unit, succumbed to his injuries at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital at about 11pm. Three of the injured Lion, Farid and Bappi were also admitted to the same hospital.

Chhatra League president Bahadur Bepari and General Secretary Ajoy Kar Khokon in a statement yesterday condemned the killing and demanded arrest of the persons involved.

Murder of 10 newsmen

FROM PAGE 12

court said.

Shamsur Rahman, senior reporter of the Daily Janakantha, was gunned down in his office in Jessore town on the night of July 20, 2000. The chargesheet of the case -- also under trial -- was submitted on May 20 last year, accusing 16 people.

Two out of the five accused in the Mir Elias Hossain Dilip murder case are still absconding. They are Tapan and Zafar -- armed cadres of the BPCP. Two others -- Hitler and Moniruzzaman -- arrested in this connection are now in Khulna District Jail, while Golam Hossain, another accused, is on bail. Dilip, editor of the Dainik Bir Darpan published from Jhenaidah, was killed on January 15, 2000.

Rezaul Karim, general secretary of the Kaliganj Press Club in Jhenidah district, was murdered on July 16, 1998. The chargesheet was submitted on October 11, 1998, with 20 people accused of the murder. The case is now under trial.

The chargesheet of Nahor Ali murder case was submitted on February last, accusing 16 people of the murder.

Nahor Ali, Dumuria upazila correspondent of the Dainik Anirvan published from Khulna, injured in an armed attack by outlaws, died at a local clinic on April 22 last year. Arrested were five out of the 16 chargesheeted accused in the case

now under trial.

Freedom fighter and editor of the Dainik Patradud published from Sathkira was gunned down at his office on June 19, 1996. The case was recorded with Sathkira Sadar Police Station the same day.

CID investigated the case and pressed charges against ten people. At present, two of the chargesheeted accused are in jail custody and six on bail, while two are absconding. The trial of the murder case has been stayed by the High court.

The crime reporter of the Dainik Din Badal, Md. Bazlur Rahman of Chuadanga, was kidnapped and killed on June 12, 1998. But the investigation officer is yet to obtain permission from the higher authorities to officially submit the chargesheet in which seven persons have been named, sources said.

The latest such incident is the killing of the Dainik Purbachal crime reporter, Shaikh Haron-or-Rashid, on March 2. The following day, a case was filed with Khalispur Police Station accusing nine people.

The investigation officer arrested three persons and grilled them on a five-day remand, but interrogation yielded no clue to the murder.

Most alleged killers of the journalists are cadres of the outlawed outfits and all journalists were murdered for writing against them, said a high official at the office of DIG, Khulna Range.