

helodhaka

Weekly weather forecast for the city

Partly sunny

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday Saturday High 25C High **23C** Low **11C**

e-mail: starcitv@thedailvstar.ne





SIMILAR, NOT THE SAME

The text (English) on the board, left, has been changed with the change of government. The photograph on the right shows the earlier version.

Gone with the wind?

Wording on the boards at Savar martyrs memorial describing the history of Liberation War changes overnight with the change of government

MIZANUR KHAN and SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

The boards in front of the National Martyrs Memorial in Savar, describing the history of the Liberation War in brief, reflect a sharp divide in politics.

Wording on the two boards in Bangla and English changes overnight with the change of government -- a practice that has continued since independ-

"No exact dates of the

changes are available, as everything is made unofficially," says a source in the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

He says the changes are made politically following ver-bal orders of high officials, but there is no formal procedure for

The Public Works Department (PWD) changed the boards after it got the green signal from the higher officials, he says, adding: "Nobody wants to wait as they fear they will be marked if the text on the boards does not please the new gov-

ernment. The officials monitor political developments before they order changes in the text." The memorial was built in

1984 when General HM Ershad was in power and the text then read: "The National Martyrs Monument, a unique creation of an artist's dream, is dedicated to the memory of those brave heroes, who laid down their lives in the Liberation War

... On the 7th March 1971, the nation took a vow to liberate the motherland in a mammoth gathering in the

Suhrawardy Udyan. The occupation forces swooped down on unarmed people in the darkness of the night of 25th March 1971 to liberate our national identity..." the text continued.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia came to power in 1992, but the text remained unchanged.

"This text was on the two boards for long -- 12 years from 1984 to 1996," said a caretaker of the memorial that sees up to 10,000 visitors a workday and more than 50,000 a holiday.

The name, Bangabandhu

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was written on the board, when his daughter Sheikh Hasina was voted into office in 1996.

"After a long discussion,

research and study, high offi-cials of Hasina's administration changed the boards. Many intellectuals and historians were involved," a PWD official said, asking not to be named.

The English text read: "Under the leadership of the great leader and father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the War of Liberation began on March 26, 1971."

But the BNP-led four-party coalition went back to the 1984 edition of the text and erased the name of Bangabandhu after it came to power replacing the AL in 2001.

"The change was planned and approved, but you will find no records. You cannot trace the official who gave the order. These sensitive changes have no track records," a high official

The late president Ziaur Rahman's name was never in the inscription and Pakistan, the country freedom fighters

fought against in 1971 was nowhere mentioned during the tenures of Ershad, Khaleda and

The brochures on the Liberation War, printed three times, face almost the same fate.

Of the brochures published to date, the one published during the AL rule was most colourful and its content differ-

Sources in Padma where the brochures were printed said the printing cost was almost Tk 50,000. The brochures were

distributed by the PWD in the first few of months after Khaleda came to power. Her administration stopped

the distribution and Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar asked the PWD to publish new brochures for distribution among participants of the 10th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Dhaka in October 2003.

The PWD printed a simple brochure with a new text in keeping with the likes of the coalition government.

30 lakh live under eviction threats

CITY CORRESPONDENT

The grim prospect of eviction looms on some 30 lakh people, a third of the capital's population, eking out a living in 3,000 slums of the megalopolis where they live in squalor.

According to the Coalition for the Urban Poor (CUP), about one lakh slum-dwellers have been evicted from 75 slums in 2000-2003 by Bangladesh Railway, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk), Dhaka City Corporation (DCC), the health ministry, the housing and public works ministry and the local government, rural development (LGRD) and cooperatives ministry.

The CUP, a network of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), said people from five slums were evicted last year by Bangladesh Railway, the DCC and the Department of Housing.

Among them, some 200 dwellings were removed near Tejgaon Railway Colony, Tejkunipara and adjacent areas in January last year.

The following month some 1,200 shanties near Osmani Udyan and about 100 others from Section 11 on Avenue 3 under Pallabi Police Station were removed by Bangladesh Railway and the Department of

In March 2003, around 100 dwellings were removed from Tejgaon-Nakhalpara areas by the railway authorities followed by the removal of 50 others from Karwan Bazar by the DCC in May.

Earlier, 35 dwellings were removed in 2002, 27 in 2001 and eight in 2000, a CUP official said.

He said some NGOs are working with the slum-dwellers to provide healthcare, sanitation and education to them but these fall far short of the

Most slum people work as domestic hands, porters, rickshawpullers, garment workers, day labourers, roadside vendors or are employed in other similar low-income jobs. The CUP is now working to

improve and manage the supply of electricity in slum areas, said the About slum-based crime, he said a very small percentage of slum-dwellers are involved in it and in most

cases they are driven to it out of sheer poverty and desperation.

He also said in many cases, such criminals are not slum-dwellers but outsiders who operate drug dealings and other criminal activities from

JU FOUNDING DAY



Jahangirnagar University celebrated its 34th founding day last week. The fiveday programme which included colourful procession, discussion, drama, film and photo shows concluded Friday. **The University** was established on January 12, 1971 with only 150 students and 22 teachers under four departments.