

Protesters vandalise city, try to disrupt Trump's oath

Police arrest nearly 100

WASHINGTON POST ONLINE

Protesters made themselves heard in the nation's capital yesterday, leaving a trail of damage along some city blocks and disrupting security checkpoints to President Trump's inauguration, where they slowed crowds from entering onto the Mall and, in at least one spot, stopped them completely.

As people poured into the city to watch Trump sworn in as the 45th president, they encountered protesters across the area throughout the day. Many of the demonstrations were nonviolent, with people holding signs that spoke to their causes and concern.

One protest even took on a carnival atmosphere, with puppets, stilt walkers and a giant inflatable elephant wearing a sign that read "racism."

But other groups tried to disrupt the day's events by burning flags, throwing bricks and rioting en masse, leading to injuries and nearly 100 arrests by early afternoon.

Six people intent on interrupting the presidential swearing-in ceremony even made it into the closest section of seats to Trump. They wore shirts that spelled out "R-E-S-I-S-T" and got up and started shouting "We the people!" as Trump took the oath of office at noon. As authorities removed them from the area, they raised their fists and shouted "USA! USA!" One woman yelled, "We're for an America for all of us."

Trump supporters and protesters clashed throughout the day at several locations, and it sometimes turned violent. One officer was slightly injured when he was struck by an object thrown during a protest along the K Street corridor, said Doug Buchanan, a spokesman for the DC. Fire and Emergency Medical Services. Authorities said two other officers were injured, one by pepper spray and another falling off a bicycle.

DC Interim Police Chief Peter Newsham said officers have arrested more than 90 people in connection with protests that turned violent on Friday and caused "significant damage to a number of blocks in our city."

PHOTO ON PAGE 8

Shakil

meeting organised by AL Mymensingh district and city unit. Leaders and activists of AL and its front organisations thronged the venue.

Minister for Religious Affairs Principal Motiur Rahman, State Minister for Textile and Jute Mirza Azam, central AL leaders Ahmed Hossain, Mezbauddin Siraj, Dr Dipu Moni, Marufa Akhter Popy, Khaled Mahmud Chowdhury, AL lawmakers from Mymensingh, Mymensingh Zila Parishad Chairman Prof Yusuf Khan Pathan and Shakil's father advocate Joruil Hoque Khoka addressed the meeting, among others.

Termining Shakil a versatile talent, they said though he was at the centre of state power but he never used it for his personal gain. This gathering proved how much the people of Mymensingh loved him, they added.

The speakers proposed naming Balashpur bypass intersection in Mymensingh Sadar upazila after Shakil.

Earlier, the speakers joined a milad and dua mahfil held at his home in Baghmara area after the Juma prayers and offered fateha at his grave at Bhatikashar graveyard, family sources said.

Born on December 20, 1968 in Tangail, Shakil was a forefront leader of anti-autocracy students' movement in the 1980s.

A former senior vice-president and organising secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League, Shakil had a great liking for poetry and prose writings. He was published twice as a poet in book forms -- "Kherokhatar Pata Theke" and "Mon Kharaper Gari" -- to his credit.

Blast near Afghan buzkashi match kills three

APP, Mazar-i-sharif

A blast hit spectators after a game of buzkashi, or polo with a carcass, in northern Afghanistan yesterday, killing at least three people in the latest spasm of violence in the wartorn country.

The explosion triggered by an improvised explosive device in Khulm district in Balk province apparently targeted an anti-Taliban militiaman attending the buzkashi match.

"An IED was detonated outside the venue of a buzkashi match, killing three people and wounding four others," Balkh deputy police chief Abdul Razaq Qaderi told AFP.

'You made me a better man'

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Obama yesterday left the Oval Office for the last time before moving to the inauguration of his successor Donald Trump.

In the letter, he recalled low points -- like the massacre in a Charleston Church -- and high points -- like the legalisation of same-sex marriage -- during his presidency.

He also urged the American people, regardless of political affiliation, to commit themselves to the "joyous work of citizenship."

"I've seen you, the American people, in all your decency, determination, good humour and kindness. And in your daily acts of citizenship, I've seen our future unfolding.

"All of us, regardless of party, should throw ourselves into that work -- the joyous work of citizenship. Not just when there's an election, not just when our own narrow interest is at stake, but over the full span of a lifetime."

Obama said he would remain engaged in issues he cares about in his post-White House life.

"I'll be right there with you every step of the way," he wrote. "And when the arc of progress seems slow, remember: America is not the project of any one person. The single most powerful word in our democracy is the word 'We.' 'We the People.' 'We shall overcome.' Yes, we can."

He also made some subtle digs at Trump in referring to issues on which they are divided.

He spoke of the success of his Obamacare health scheme, which Trump has vowed to undo. And he mentioned that even young children reminded us of our "obligations to care for refugees."

GITMO CLOSURE

Obama delivered an angry parting shot at Congress on Thursday, berating Republicans for blocking his efforts to close the military detention centre at Guantanamo Bay.

The facility "never should have been opened in the first place", Obama said in a scathing two-page letter.

"There is simply no justification beyond politics for the Congress' insistence on keeping the facility open," he added.

Trump has vowed not just to keep Guantanamo open, but to boost the number of terror suspects housed there -- even raising the prospect of US

citizens being sent to the facility.

"We're going to load it up with some bad dudes, believe me, we're going to load it up," Trump said while campaigning last year.

On another occasion, he said "it would be fine" if US terror suspects were sent there for trial.

One of Obama's first acts as president in 2009 was to issue an executive order to shut the controversial jail within a year -- a move that once enjoyed bipartisan support.

But Republican opponents, sensing a political vulnerability, quickly reversed course after Obama took office and blocked moves to close Guantanamo.

COMMUTATIONS

Obama on Thursday commuted the sentences of 330 people, mostly drug offenders, a record number issued in a single day, on the eve of his departure from the White House.

It is Obama's second such measure this week, including his surprise decision to commute the sentence of transgender army private Chelsea Manning, jailed for 35 years for handing more than 700,000 classified US documents to WikiLeaks.

Originally set to be released in 2045, Manning will now walk free in May, reports AFP.

On Tuesday, the president pardoned another 64 people -- including a former general who was a key member of his first national security team -- and commuted the sentence of 208 prisoners in addition to Manning's.

Thursday's announcement raises Obama's record for commutations to a total of 1,715, more than any other US president. He has freed 568 inmates sentenced to life in prison.

Most of the beneficiaries were serving lengthy sentences for small and first-time drug offences. Obama has long called for correcting what he says is systematic injustice under a penal system now widely criticised for doling out excessive mandatory minimum sentences.

Obama, who favours alternative punishments for such offenders, repeatedly and unsuccessfully urged Congress to pass broad criminal justice reform.

More than 2.2 million people are currently behind bars in the US. They include legions of mentally ill and drug addicts, often from disadvantaged minority groups.

HRW asks govt

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"Yet it should not only happen when the victim is a ruling party member."

It said for too long, Rab officials have been "shielded" from prosecution by successive governments, some even justifying their crimes.

Blaming the government for responsible for the situation, the rights organisation said the government has created "the climate of impunity."

"In recent cases, when Rab and other law enforcement agencies have disappeared people, witnesses say officers arrived claiming they were from the 'administration', an open admission they worked for the state. Many of the disappeared people have later turned up dead."

Rab is a mixed force of police and soldiers, the press statement said, adding that although it is formally led by a civilian officer, it is "the army that controls Rab".

Involving trained-to-kill soldiers in law enforcement is inherently risky, but the police also have their own problems with abuse, the statement added.

In recent years, members of the Detective Branch of police have also been responsible for "Rab-style serious human rights violations, including deliberately maiming suspects in custody by shooting them in the leg", the HRW mentioned.

'RAB IMAGE UNHARMED'

The seven-murder verdict would not affect the image of Rab, which has been serving the nation for the last 13 years with confidence, claims Benazir

Villagers knit

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The conservation centre takes in rescued elephants who have previously suffered chronic neglect and beatings from cruel handlers.

Photographs show female elephants wearing the carefully embroidered outfits, which cover their legs, back and neck, as centre staff and villagers stand among them.

Kartick Satyanarayan, founder of the centre, said it was important to protect the formerly abused elephants from the cold.

"It is important to keep our elephants protected from the bitter cold during this extreme winter, as they are weak and vulnerable having suffered so much abuse making them susceptible to ailments such as pneumonia," she told the Times of India.

"The cold also aggravates their arthritis which is a common issue that our rescued elephants have to deal with."

The centre currently houses 20 elephants that have been rescued from illegal captivity, trafficking mafia, exploited for street begging and circuses where they were abused and subjected to extreme cruelty.

Staff have plans to rescue a further 50 elephants in 2017, with hopes to secure more land to expand the sanctuary.

Ahmed, director general of the force, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

In the seven-murder case, 25 former Rab members were awarded punishment.

They got punishment for their misdeeds, he said while speaking as the chief guest at a warm clothes distribution programme at the field of Rangpur Water Development Board yesterday. Rab-13 organised the programme.

Being a disciplined force in the country, Rab also investigated the seven-murder incident and suspended the accused when the probe body found them guilty, Benazir said.

About the Liton murder case, the Rab DG said the force was working alongside police to find out the reason behind the killing of the lawmaker and those involved in the incident.

Rab would not encourage any criminals, said Benazir.

He also urged the rich to help the poor in the region.

Col Anwar Latif, additional director general of Rab, and Bashir Ahmed, acting DIG of police (Rangpur range), and Atiqullah, commander of Rab-13, were also present at the event.

Save the Sylhet

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pet monkeys. The monkeys multiplied and the shrine became famous.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, Sylhet chapter, told this correspondent that as locals use trees and plants as firewood, the number of trees and bushes in Tilaghar forest area had declined significantly in recent years. The monkeys rely on fruits, which have become hard to find near the forest, he added.

Sharif Jamil, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, told this correspondent that the government should make sure that the monkeys were feed properly. Unplanned urbanisation in Sylhet has caused the habitat conflict.

Monkeys lost their habitat and their food crisis began.

He said government should ensure food for the money and restore their habitat. This particular crisis could be turned into an economically viable tourism spot, he claimed.

When asked, RFM Monirul Islam, divisional forest officer of the Sylhet Forest Division, yesterday said they have no allocation from the government for feeding the monkeys.

He said he would inform higher authorities of the situation on the ground after visiting the spot. It would be up to the higher authorities whether they want to have allocations for monkeys, he added.

He said locals, including local councillors, complained to them about the "monkey menace". "Monkeys bother people only when people bother them." It is not in their nature to disturb people, he claimed.

Jammeh given

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regional organisation ECOWAS said.

Jammeh wants an extension of the midday deadline until 4:00 pm (1600 GMT), according to Gambian government sources. It was not clear what he planned to do, though diplomats said his departure looked increasingly possible.

"It's out of the question that he stays in place," said Marcel de Souza, head of an ECOWAS mission.

Jammeh, in power since a 1994 coup, initially conceded defeat to Barrow following a Dec 1 election before back-tracking, saying the vote was flawed and demanding a new ballot.

Diplomats said regional leaders had been close to a deal before but talks broke down over where Jammeh goes. While Barrow's aides say Jammeh can remain in the country on his Kanilai estate, Senegal insists he leave Gambia, diplomats said.

His estate is heavily fortified, witnesses say, and just 1 km from Senegal's border.

"There is a real possibility this could work. I don't think he is going the (Saddam) Hussein route," said a regional diplomat, referring to the Iraqi leader who was arrested in 2003 following an invasion, tried and hanged.

One of Africa's smallest countries, Gambia is of little strategic significance. But if a peaceful transition of power fails, it would be a setback for the advance of democracy in Africa, a continent where autocrats have often held sway since the end of Western colonial rule.

Jammeh, who once vowed to rule Gambia "for a billion years", earned a reputation for torturing and killing perceived opponents. He pulled Gambia out of the Commonwealth in 2013 and declared the country an Islamic state in 2015.

REFUGEES FLEE TO SENEGAL

Gambia's only land border is with Senegal and the regional coalition, which ECOWAS says involves 7,000 troops, which is backed by tanks and warplanes, entered from the south-east, southwest and north.

UN officials including Mohammed Ibn Chambas, UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, were already in Banjul.

Streets in the capital were mostly deserted yesterday and shops, restaurants and petrol stations were shut.

The UN refugee agency UNHCR said about 45,000 people, mainly children, have fled to Senegal since Jan 1. It cited figures from the Senegalese government.

Residents near the border said army defectors were among them and one resident said he saw four Gambian military vehicles crossing into Senegal overnight.

Thousands of tourists have also left the country. Gambia, with its Atlantic beaches, is a popular holiday destination for Europeans and tourism is a mainstay of an economy otherwise reliant on peanut production and remittances from overseas.

Barrow has been recognised as Gambia's new president by world powers and Jammeh is increasingly isolated at home as ministers abandoned his camp.

Hundreds of people celebrated Barrow's swearing in and the ECOWAS advance into Gambia.

Jammeh on Thursday dissolved the government - half of whose members have resigned - and pledged to name a new one.

Support for him remained strong in some quarters, reflecting his years of power in the country of 1.8 million people.

"Why should the other countries interfere. Why should they force him to leave?" said Momodou Badji, 78, in Banjul's Kanifing neighbourhood.

On Thursday night, army chief General Ousman Badjie, who had stood by Jammeh, was seen smiling on the streets, wading through a mass of jubilant Banjul residents shouting and dancing.

Innovative!

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The rods would have to be installed on top of the buildings and those are attached to thick conducting cables. When the lightning strikes the rod, the current would pass on to the ground.

"The building code is now at the law ministry for vetting and once it is passed, the risks will be reduced," he said.

Apart from this, he also said the government was planning to set up some towers in waterbodies like Tanguar Haor, Cholon Beel where there is no such big trees.

Every year, many people are being killed in lightning strikes in those places.

Mahbuba Nasreen, director of Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies, said, "I cannot say whether it is scientifically right, but this is in practice here for a long time. Usually, lightning strikes the tallest trees."

2nd phase of Ijtema

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prayers) on January 15, while the second phase would be concluded with Akheri Munajat tomorrow.

Tablig Jamaat has been organising the annual congregation, also called the World Muslims' Congregation, every year since 1946.

The three-day meet includes delivery of sermons on fundamental matters of Tablig, prayers for spiritual adulation, exaltation and welfare of the Muslim Ummah, and recitation from the holy Quran and Hadith.

Ulema and Islamic scholars from around the world are delivering lectures this year. The lectures would be interpreted in Bangla, English, Arabic and a few other languages.

As the Ijtema committee last year decided to hold the congregation in four phases in two years, devotees of 32 districts performed their Ijtema last year in two phases and rest 32 are taking part in two phases this year.

The districts taking part in the second phase are Dhaka, Meherpur, Lalmonirhat, Rajbari, Dinajpur, Habiganj, Munshiganj, Kishoreganj, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Bagerhat,

Chandpur, Pabna, Naogaon, Kushtia, Barguna and Barisal.

In the first phase devotees from Dhaka, Tangail, Mymensingh, Joypurhat, Manikganj, Rangpur, Chapainawabganj, Brahmanbaria, Gazipur, Gopalganj, Shariatpur, Satkhira and Jessore took part.

Thousands of volunteers have meanwhile been working round the clock to ensure smooth running of the event. Security is high and around 12,000 personnel from different security agencies have been posted in and around the venue for the two phases.

Observation towers have been set up to monitor movements at the venue and closed-circuit television cameras are being used to ensure security.

Special measures have been taken to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity during the event.

Like the first phase, free medical services are being given by both the government and private agencies, while Bangladesh Railway and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation have taken initiatives to provide special train and bus services for the devotees.

Declare March 25

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For this reason, most of the western media outlets, researchers and policymakers don't consider the 1971 war crimes as genocide, said Shahriar, the newly elected president of the committee.

Referring to the Armenian genocide in 1915, he said both the government and the civil society of that country worked to gain recognition of the genocide, and so far at least 40 countries have recognised it.

"Our government should take diplomatic initiatives to gain international recognition of the genocide committed in 1971," he said.

Mofidul Hoque, another war crimes researcher, said the 1971 genocide was widely recognised by the observers and global media at that time, but it became a "forgotten genocide" after 1971.

Though all the accused in the ongoing war crimes trial claimed they were not involved in the crimes and pleaded not guilty before the International Crimes Tribunal, none of them denied the commission of genocide in 1971, said Mofidul, a trustee of the Liberation War Museum.

HT Imam, an adviser to the prime minister, said he would convey the demand for announcing March 25 as "National Genocide Day" to the PM and the cabinet.

About Pakistan army's brutality, Imam said that Pakistani General Rao Farman Ali in his desk diary wrote that he would "paint the green of East Pakistan red."

The Pakistan army was succeeded in doing that, and committed one of the worst genocides of the 20th century, he said.

The adviser noted that Archer K Blood, the then US consul general in Dhaka, sent a secret cable to the US Department of State in 1971, terming the killings "selective genocide".

Later, Archer K Blood wrote "as far as I know, it was the first time that the term had been used, but it was not to be the last", mentioned Imam.

Those who opposed the Liberation War, secularism and the rule of law, are now playing a key role in spreading

fundamentalism in the country, he said.

Maj Gen (ret'd) Abdur Rashid, a security expert, said a number of countries didn't support the war crimes trial, but people and political leaders of Bangladesh made it happen.

He further said it's important to free the radicalised people from extremist beliefs.

"We have to understand how these people are radicalised..." It is necessary to track down all the militant networks in the country and destroy those, said Rashid.

The key to de-radicalisation is the separation of religion from politics, he noted.

Yaba Nath Lamsal, a journalist from Nepal, said, "Talibanisation and Laskarisation process is going on in South Asia. We must stand against this."

It's not possible to have true democracy without secularism, he added.

Julian Francis, who was an activist of Oxfam in 1971, made mentions of the brutality of the Pakistan army in 1971, and said it was estimated that about 200,000 Bangalees had been killed from March 25 to 31.

Attorney William Sloan from Canada said impunity doesn't bring any good to the society.

Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik, former judge of the Supreme Court, said it's not possible to stop fundamentalist forces without unity among all pro-liberation people, and there can be no compromise in this regard.

Indian journalist and cultural activist Geetesh Sharma said terrorism is one of the major problems in the Saarc countries.

He said those, who don't understand religion properly, spread communalism.

The discussants said the Bangladesh government should adopt a de-radicalisation strategy immediately to stop all the anti-liberation forces from spreading extremism in the country.

Erik Hedlund, a human rights activist from Sweden, and Professor Mir Mobashsher Ali, nayeb-e-ameer of National Ahmadiyya Jamaat, also spoke.

Looking for long lost father

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"My father tried to bring me back with him, but my mother wanted to raise me and educate me there. So, she just ran away taking me and a suitcase, leaving everything in the house they had behind."

Apart from a couple of pictures of his parents' wedding, he has nothing of his father. Suab Ali took everything along when he left the UK in 1986.

His mother, who still lives in London, and he never heard from his father since.

"I'm about to become a father very soon. It's really important that my child knows my heritage. That's why I have embarked on this quest."

Having stayed in the Old Dhaka neighbourhoods for two weeks and been associated with the culture of his father, he got answers to questions that had bothered him all his life.

"Old Dhaka has really helped me understand my character. I know from where I got my sweet tooth, charm, cheeky nature, hard work and positive way of thinking," he said.

Henshall had always wondered how his life would have been had his father brought him to Bangladesh. The visit, he said, helped him understand that to some extent.

"I feel a deep connection. Like my father, I had become a trained chef when I was 15 and worked in some upscale restaurants and organisations."

He went to Australia nine years ago when he was offered the position of head chef at the central bank of Australia. He settled there and later founded his own media agency on food.

"I want to find my father not to be mad at him but to just meet him and understand myself better."

During his stay in Dhaka, he went to the British High Commission here. He also contacted the Bangladesh high commission in the UK.

"I wanted to know whether he had a UK passport, his arrival date in Bangladesh and any other identification, but they said they didn't have the information from back then."

Henshall also told a lot of people his story and went to the police.

People here are very friendly. Everyone has been very hospitable and welcoming, he said.

"My mother did a great job raising me. The only unfortunate thing is my father and mother never kept in touch after they parted ways and he never contacted me."

He wished that his father had looked up his mother's family name on the social media and found him.

"I will come back again to search for him," Henshall said.

Internet

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work of India-Middle East-Western Europe submarine cable would be completed, which Suman expected to happen by January 30.

Bangladeshi users have been experiencing slow internet since January 4 due to technical glitches, including the