

Portrait act

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while Awami League was in office, the seventh parliament passed The Preservation and Display of Portrait of the Father of the Nation Bill 2001.

Earlier, in a last ditch effort for reconciliation a backstage parley between representatives of the ruling alliance and the AL ended inconclusively.

Immediately afterwards, some 34 out of the 58 AL lawmakers brought out the procession from in front of the Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina's office in the Jatiya Sangsad and marched out of the parliament building at 8:15 last night.

The Awami League MPs, who have been staying off the parliament since its maiden sitting, went to the parliament yesterday to register their protest against the move towards passage of the bill, but did not attend the proceedings.

The AL lawmakers staged stormy protest and brought out a procession carrying black flags from the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban denouncing the passage of the bill.

The opposition legislators staged a brief sit-in in front of the opposition leader's parliament office, put on black badges and brought out the procession carrying black flags.

Earlier, briefing newsmen in front of the opposition leader's Sangsad Bhaban chamber, General Secretary of the AL Zillur Rahman said the government was passing the bill thanks to a brute majority and warned that "the government has to take responsibility for the consequences".

Zillur, senior presidium member Abdus Samad Azad and Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid along with other senior party leaders and lawmakers led the procession, walking down the stairs and chanting full-throated slogans denouncing the passage of the bill.

A huge contingent of riot police and paramilitary BDR forces were stationed at the entrance to the parliament building and areas close by. Dozens of plainclothes policemen and detectives swarmed the parliament building. Some others were stationed around the opposition leader's office.

During the parley, BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and

Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Advisor Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury urged the AL leaders to discuss contentious issues and try to reach an amicable solution so that they can join the parliament.

AL leaders Abdus Samad Azad and Abdul Jalil, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and party lawmaker Kazi Jafrullah represented the AL side in the dialogue. As the AL leaders asked for withdrawal of the said bill first, the BNP leaders said it was not possible, leading to the breakdown of talks.

Earlier, an adjourned meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) was held at opposition leader's Sangsad Bhaban chamber at 4:00pm. Abdus Samad Azad chaired the hour-long meeting attended by 34 out of the 58 AL lawmakers.

The meeting condemned the government move for passage of the bill despite strong opposition protests.

Earlier, ruling BNP lawmaker Shamsul Alam Pramanik moved the bill for passage and the House unanimously approved it by voice vote amid thumping of desks and applause by the treasury bench.

He said there is no reason to call Sheikh Mujibur Rahman the Father of the Nation and display his portrait in government offices. "It was a misleading law," he observed.

Abdul Kader Siddiqui of Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League and independent lawmaker Delwar Hossain lodged protest against the passage of the bill and walk out of the House. The lawmakers earlier yesterday proposed that the bill be sent to a select committee and made available for public scrutiny since, they feared, the passage of the bill would divide the nation and crate anarchy.

Jatiya Party lawmakers Golam Mohammad Quader, Dr. TIM Fazle Rabbi Chowdhury, Tazul Islam Chowdhury and Golam Habib Dulal of Jatiya Party (Ershad) also opposed the passage of the bill.

With the presidential assent to the bill likely within a day or two, the provision for display and preservation of the portrait of the Bangabandhu will be removed from government offices.

Nomination of Ershad Shikdar cancelled

UNB, Khulna

Nomination of Ershad Shikdar, convicted in seven murder cases, for commissioner post was cancelled after scrutiny yesterday.

Deputy Election Commissioner cancelled the nomination of Ershad Shikdar who was given death sentence in five cases and life-term imprisonment in two cases.

Son of Ershad Shikdar collected and submitted the nomination paper in favour of his father for commissioner race from ward no 21.

Ershad Shikdar was elected commissioner from the same ward in 1998 and 1994.

Elephant

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tors in 1997, he said.

Anisuzzaman recommended that the elephant be set free in the forests among its herd for rehabilitation after proper treatment and assessment.

Dr Mohammad Ali Reza Khan, a Bangladeshi animal biologist, and head of the Dubai Zoo, has suggested that if an elephant "is having a chain round its leg it must be d a r t e d / t r a n q u i l i s e d ... the chain be removed and the animal be released back to nature".

The government should not allow anyone to kill an elephant only because it demolished a house or trampled a man to death, the biologist suggested.

Anything that comes as a hindrance to the free movement of an elephant within its territory would face the challenge from the elephants.

If the local people fail to withstand rampages of elephants, the government must ensure that a particular animal or a group of elephants is tranquilised and transported to other forests, he said.

If it is still impossible, the captured animals should be handed over to various zoos of the country, which should be provided with sufficient fund and facilities beforehand.

The IUCN should also funnel funds to this end, Dr Khan, who was a member of the IUCN elephant specialist group up to 1989 or so, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Alamgir

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today.

Magistrate Kazi Meraj Hossain passed the order upon two petitions by the defence lawyers.

Of the petitions, one concerned producing Alamgir before the court and the other sought division for in jail custody.

They defence lawyers stated that Alamgir was placed on a two-day fresh remand at 3:30 pm on March 19 and the remand period expired yesterday at 3:30 pm. But the IO did not produce the accused before the court. So, they prayed for producing the accused before the court. They also prayed for Division for Alamgir in the jail custody.

The prosecution side stated that the two-day remand would expire today (Thursday) and he (Alamgir) would be produced in the court today.

The former state minister was arrested from ZIA on March 15 on his return from abroad. Later, he was charged with instigating government officials and employees to join the anti-government movement led the anti-'Janatar Mancha' (people's dais) in the city in 1996.

Girders

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DCC to remove girders from all under-construction footbridges within seven days after a girder collapsed at Science Laboratory crossing on March 14, killing one person.

Earlier, another person was killed when a girder collapsed at Baridhara.

Surma International was given the contract to construct eight footbridges in the city.

Media men

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raise any question.

However, Director (Public Relations) at the Parliament Secretariat Nesaruddin Bhuiyan rushed to the scene and took the journalists inside. But, they had to leave their mobile phones behind.

Only state-run BTV crew were allowed to cover yesterday's parliament session. Private TV channels Ekushey Television, Channel 1 and ATN Bangla were not allowed to carry TV camera inside the parliament building. The BBC was also not permitted to carry recording equipment inside.

Bangladesh Parliament Journalists' Association President Shafiqur Rahman and General Secretary Rezwanul Huq in a statement condemned the incident.

They demanded an inquiry into the alleged harassment of journalists and punishment to those responsible.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia is briefed on various activities of the army at the army headquarters in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

One killed, 3 hurt in Sunamganj police firing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A college student was killed and three others were injured in police firing at village Bhati Tahirpur in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj district in the early hours of yesterday.

The dead was identified as Shiplu, 22, a student of Badaghat Degree College.

Police and local people said the incident occurred when a police team from Tahirpur thana arrested Shafiqul Islam, Jubo League activist, from his home at about 3 am.

Neighbours and family members of Shafiqul swooped on police and snatched him (Shafiqul) from their grip.

In the face of attack, police opened fire, leaving Shiplu, his mother Amirunnessa, 45, sister Roushan Ara, 3, and Shafiqul injured. Shiplu succumbed to his injuries on way to hospital.

Police said they had to open fire in self defence in the face of mob attack.

The injured were admitted to Sunamganj Sadar Hospital.

A procession was brought out at Tahirpur upazila headquarters yesterday afternoon protesting the killing.

Police filed two cases with Tahirpur thana.

Annan praises Bangladesh edn programme

BSS, Dhaka

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has appreciated Bangladesh's programmes on the education sector as a role model for development in education as he upheld programmes and policies adopted by Khaleda Zia during her 1991-96 tenure on Education particularly for development of female education.

"That is development. It is not abstract. It's a real change in the lives of real people eager to improve their own conditions, if only they can get a real chance," said Kofi Annan while elaborating on how adoption of right policies on education in Bangladesh in 1993 brought about a change in the lives of people.

UN Secretary General's appreciation came in his signed article entitled "trade and aid in a changed world" published in the New York Times in its March 19 issue.

Annan said such financial investment programmes for the development of female education had led to the improvement of the fate of millions of people including female in terms of smaller families, more employment, lower birth rate, better health practices, enhancement of enrolment in schools, dying of fewer children in infancy and a more productive labour force.

In his article he cited a number of districts including "Narsinghdi" where scenario is changing in education sector due to proper programmes undertaken by Bangladesh.

While giving an overview on education in Narsinghdi, Kofi Annan said girls enrolment there has more than doubled and in three years the proportion of married women between 19 to 15 dropped to 14 per cent from 29 per cent.

"Families are getting smaller and more women are employed with higher incomes. The benefits will reach far beyond individual girls," he added.

Nasim's bail

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the passport yesterday.

The defence lawyers on March 11 filed a criminal appeal with the sessions judge's court against the March 7 order of the CMM's court rejecting the bail prayer.

Nasim was arrested from ZIA International Airport on February 27 on charge of smuggling foreign currency. Later, he was shown arrested in the case filed with Madanpur thana on charge of firing shots on the motorcade of Khaleda Zia when she was Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad.

Meanwhile, the CMM's court yesterday stayed the hearing on remand for Nasim in connection with the sedition case till disposal of the rule, pending with the High Court regarding remand.

The investigation officer (IO) of the case submitted a petition on March 13, seeking a 10-day remand.

The court had earlier fixed yes-

Cash, gold looted

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1:30am.

The robbers had first entered an adjoining six-storey building, where three sub-inspectors and one ASP reside, after forcing the night guard to open the collapsible gate of the building at gunpoint.

As residents of the building became aware of their presence, the robbers reportedly told them not to call for police help claiming that the law enforcers were on their side.

Thereafter, they went up to the rooftop of the six-storey building and climbed down to their targeted apartment on the adjoining five-storey building through a staircase linking the two buildings.

After cutting the window grill of the residence of Ilias Talukder, who was in Abu Dhabi at that time, the robbers looted 200 tolas of gold ornaments and cash Tk 7 lakh, holding the inmates of the house hostage at gunpoint, said the housewife.

Witnesses alleged that despite

Clarification

UNB, Dhaka

Amin Jewellers yesterday said no diamond was seized from its shop in Gulshan as reported in some newspapers yesterday.

In a clarification, it claimed that the Customs Intelligence temporarily seized legally imported ornaments in view of complication about payment of duty.

A report by the agency said diamond-studded gold ornaments worth about Tk 1.5 crore were seized from the jewellery.

Uncle, nephew murdered in Sirajganj

BSS, Sirajganj

Uncle and his nephew were stabbed to death by the armed miscreants at Jarillah Prorabari, near Jamuna Bridge in the early hours of yesterday.

The victims have been identified as Amjad Ali, 40, son of late Monser Ali of Jhawil village under Kamarkhanda upazila and his uncle, Hassain Ali, 37, son of late Kantu Sarker of Tamai village under Belkuchi upazila in Sirajganj.

When the victims reached the spot from Dhaka on a motorbike at about 4:30 am the miscreants ambushed them, police said.

Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Sirajganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Police said both are wanted accused as they were involved in many crimes, including murders. They were allegedly involved in the murder of Belal Hossain, ex-UP chairman of Saidabad Union under sadar upazila. Amzad's four other brothers were murdered in the same way.

Amzad's Bhabi (sister-in-law) lodged a double murder case with Sirajganj Sadar Police Station.

being informed over phone, it took the police over an hour and a half to come from the thana, which is only a few hundred yards away, and take position on the road in front of the house while the robbers were still looting.

After police's arrival, the robbers shot around fifty rounds of fire, leaving the night guard and two other people injured, and escaped easily through the same open field behind the building compounds they came through.

Witnesses alleged that before the robbers fled, the local people gathered and tried to get help but were stopped by police who took position at the ends of the road.

The incident created a strong resentment among residents in the area. The owner of the house Ilias Talukder also flew back home in the evening yesterday after hearing about the robbery.

2 get life term for murder in Mymensingh

UNB, Mymensingh

A court here yesterday sentenced two people to life term rigorous imprisonment for killing a youth.

The court also fined convicts Ferdous, 35, and Ibrahim, 34, of Bhadekopa in Sadar upazila Tk 5,000, in default, to suffer another two years RI.

The case history in brief: Ferdous and Ibrahim abducted Al-Amin, son of Sohrob Ali of Bhadekopa on Oct 11, 1999. The body of Al-Amin was recovered from an under construction building on Dec 5, 1999.

After examining witnesses and records, the District and Sessions Judge pronounced the judgement.

Jubo Dal leader shot by JCD men in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Jubo Dal leader received bullet wounds in an attack by JCD activists at Lalkhan Bazar in the city on Wednesday night.

Police said, Md. Ismail, president of Jubo Dal Lalkhan Bazar unit, came under attack by JCD activists led by Swapon at High Level road in the area at around 1am.

After the attack, activists of both the feuding groups exchanged several rounds of fire, police said.

Ismail was admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) in a critical condition.

Police said, the attack was a sequel to rivalry between the two groups toll collection in the area.

Police said, the group led by JCD leader Swapon was allegedly involved in illegal toll collection and different criminal activities in the area. Police arrested one Jasim. A case was filed with Khulshi thana in this connection.

Acid attack on housewife in Nilphamari

UNB, Nilphamari

A young housewife sustained severe burn injuries when a miscreant threw acid on her at village Purbo Shimulbari of Jaldhaka upazila early yesterday morning.

Victim Arjina, 22, wife of Anisur Rahman, was rushed to the upazila health complex. Later, local BRAC Office arranged transport to send her to Acid Survivors Foundation in Dhaka.

A case was filed accusing five persons, including Mansur Ali, cousin and neighbour of Anisur. Police could not arrest any of them till yesterday evening as they went to hiding.

Suspecting Mansur Ali for throwing acid on Arjina when she was asleep, family sources said he had threatened to take revenge on her as her husband complained against him to the UP chairman.

Jaldhaka police said they visited the victim at the health complex on an information. "We are taking all steps to round up the culprits," said OC Abdus Sattar.

Let's end controversy

FROM PAGE 1

The prime minister paid tributes to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a "national leader and recalled his role and contribution to the Liberation War in 1971 despite his absence.

"We don't dispute his role. We want to give him his due recognition and, at the same time, we want to recall the contribution of the proclaimer of independence Shaheed Ziaur Rahman," she said.

Khaleda lamented that the role of Zia was undermined and, even in parliament, indecorous and audacious remarks were made about him. "As independence and Bangladesh are a reality, Zia as proclaimer (of independence) is also a fact", she said.

Referring to the background of the struggle for independence, the prime minister said Sheikh Mujibur Rahman played an important role during the Liberation War. "History will judge his success and failure, merits and demerits. We're more interested in looking ahead instead of the past."

Khaleda said she had paid respect to Sheikh Mujib in her speeches on various occasions in the past. "Even today, I pay my respect to him."

She, however, said respect cannot be earned forcibly. "It is not decent to display portrait by force. This is not the way to show respect to a national leader."

Welcoming the passage of the repeal bill, piloted by BNP MP Shamsul Alam Pramanik, the prime minister said, "Today, we are going to free the history of liability. We're going to free the nation from a sort of compulsion."

She said like the unilateral move of displaying the portrait of Sheikh

Shahriar

FROM PAGE 12

Shahriar's passport so that he can join a workshop on the International Institute for Social History (IISH) in the Netherlands as South Asian representative of the institute.

Shahriar Kabir was arrested on November 22 last year by Special Branch (SB) of police from Zia International Airport on his return from Kolkata.

Police also seized his passport and some video cassettes.

Later, he was shown arrested under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

The Sedition case against Shahriar Kabir was filed with the CMM's Court Dhaka on December 8 last year.

Demean Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 1

terrorists", Hasina called for a social boycott of these terrorists and rapists.

In a rebuttal to the Prime Minister's warning against the opposition for any indiscipline, she said when the Prime Minister herself did not maintain discipline, her MPs and ministers quarreled with each other and could not meet the quorum in the House, it was paradoxical that she should issue a threat to the opposition regarding indiscipline.

The opposition leader alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance "grabbed power by rigging and manipulating the election results under a deep conspiracy on October 1."

Castigating the government for filing sedition cases against opposition leaders and workers, Hasina questioned the Prime Minister's allegiance and asked whether she is trying to please her "old masters" and shedding crocodile tears by bringing sedition charges against those "who liberated the country in 1971."

She accused the government of failing to run the country and said the Finance Minister went to Paris to beg alms but he returned with an empty basket, as the donors did not trust the government. Instead of giving aid, she said the development partners advised the government to

Mujib, one party BKSAL was also imposed once on the people, killing democracy. People could not accept that (BKSAL) and it resulted in an unfortunate incident. Without taking lessons from that event, they (Awami League) went for another such unilateral step, Khaleda said.

Hasina addresses rally at Khulna Circuit House ground today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will address a public meeting at Circuit House maidan today.

According to Khulna district AL president, the authorities have given permission to hold public meeting at Circuit House maidan.

Earlier AL leaders were told by the Deputy Commissioner not to hold public rally at Circuit House maidan for security reason.

Refusal to give permission created discontent among the leaders and activists of Awami League who threatened severe consequence for such decision of the district administration.

Leaders of the party expressed their firm determination to hold public meeting at circuit house maidan at any cost.

In the act

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Abul Khair for the demand note but he asked for Tk 2,000 more.

Accordingly, she brought Tk 2,000 yesterday but the STO demanded more money. As the bargaining was going on the minister suddenly appeared there and caught the STO red-handed.

On Wednesday, a surprise visit of the minister to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar telephone exchange helped hundreds of subscribers get their analogue phones converted into digital ones overnight.

It was learnt that the minister during the visit asked the officials concerned why the analogue system was not changed even after the month of February, the deadline set by the T&T board for conversion of the phones.

Following the minister's visit, the subscribers to their utter surprise received phone calls from the exchange yesterday morning informing them of their new digital numbers.

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Traffic trouble

FROM PAGE 12

open without any construction. A space of about ten feet must be left empty on the back and two sides of the building.

To make things worse, there are at least four English-medium schools, about half a dozen offices and a dozen pharmacies, shops and restaurants along the road.

The medical college has rented a plot to park its own fleet of service vehicles but done nothing for thousands of patients and visitors who come to the hospital everyday. The small car park in the basement has been converted into classrooms for medical students.

Principal of the Bangladesh Medical College Major General (retd) Anis Waiz said that the authorities had to turn the parking lot into classrooms due to an unexpectedly high number of enrolments.

He informed that construction of the college's Uttara campus was on and once finished it would ease some pressure off the Dhanmondi campus.

However, he said that it might not bring about any positive change to the traffic scenario in the area, because of the four schools operating on the same road.

The medical college has nearly 600 students and the hospital about 250 staff, he said.

The vehicles carrying students to the college are not allowed to remain parked outside the building

during class hours, he informed.

The principal also revealed that he had had talks with officials of the Traffic Department who have agreed to make the road one way.

Ali Karam Reza, executive administrator of the Maple Leaf International School, next doors to the college told The Daily Star that many of his students and teachers