

# 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 Salauddin 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 create 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.

# Traffic trouble

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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 arrive late at school everyday due to traffic congestion in the area.

"In the past we tried to sit down together and solve the traffic problem but nobody seemed interested," he said.

Local residents say that the hospital authorities have also flouted construction rules by raising its height to more than six storeys.

There are also questions about how the hospital manages the clinical waste generated everyday.

"We are virtually held hostage to these commercial activities in our residential area. Many neighbours have left and many others are thinking of leaving the area in the face of invasion by businessmen who do not have any respect for others," said a retired government official living in the area.

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 from the 'Janata 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

FROM PAGE 1  
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 Ekuushey 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.

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

The court had earlier fixed yes-

terday for hearing on the petition. The court had also directed the authorities concerned to produce Nasim before it during the hearing.

Nasim was produced before the CMM's court at 12.30 pm yesterday. Later, Magistrate Kazi Meraj Hossain along with defence lawyers went to the court hajat to see the health condition of Nasim.

The sedition case against Nasim was filed with the CMM's court on March 11.

**Moyeen Khan**

FROM PAGE 12  
and driving a car without flag.

At about 2.00pm yesterday, Dr Moyeen Khan went to the official residence of LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and had a brief talk with him, the sources said.

Several ministers have reportedly requested him to accept the new portfolio, but he declined, the sources added.

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.

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