

BANGABANDHU'S BIRTH CENTENARY

World leaders to take part in programmes

Modi, Mahathir, Trudeau among them

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

World leaders and other eminent personalities will visit Bangladesh to attend various programmes to be held marking Bangabandhu's birth centenary throughout the year.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday told this to reporters after a Bangabandhu Birth Centennial Celebration Sub-committee on International Affairs' meeting held at the capital's International Mother Language Institute.

The expected guests are Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, former Indian president Pranab Mukherjee, former UN Secretary

General Ban Ki-moon, President of Indian National Congress Sonia Gandhi, and OIC Secretary General Dr Yousef Al-Othaimen.

"They will attend different programmes to be held through the year. The schedule is yet to be finalised," said Momen.

The countdown of Mujib Borsho, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary, will start on January 10. The celebration will begin on March 17.

To celebrate the year, Bangladesh missions across the globe will also arrange seminars, art exhibitions and other programmes, said the minister.

Murals of the Father of the Nation will also be set up at some of the missions, he added.

"Bangabandhu was a friend of the deprived people of the world. By following the path shown by him, SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



A local throwing a fishing net into the Turag river in Tongi of Gazipur on Monday. The man said he catches fish in the river three days a week and earns about Tk 1,000 a day by selling fish. Locals said there was hardly any fish in this part of the river for about one and a half years till June last year. But things have changed for the last six months.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangabandhu speaks to the world

IN COLLABORATION WITH



FROM PAGE 1

President Yahya Khan a few days after Pakistan army's defeat in the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971 and announced Bangabandhu's release in the face of tremendous pressure from the world community.

As the special aircraft carrying Bangabandhu took off in the deepening night, Bhutto said to no one in particular, "The nightingale has flown."

The plane landed in the Heathrow airport in a chilly frosty morning on January 8, 1972. Bangabandhu stepped out of the plane as a free man after having spent over nine agonising months in Pakistani jail.

Entering the VIP lounge, an announcement of a telephone call for "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman" was heard. Bangabandhu asked Dr Kamal to take the call.

At the other end of the phone was Ian Sutherland of the British Foreign Office, who told Dr Kamal that the British government had received a message regarding their arrival only an hour ago. He had, however, taken immediate steps to receive Bangabandhu.

Alerted by the British Foreign Office about the development, MM Rezaul Karim, who was then acting as head of the unofficial Bangladesh Mission in London, started driving down to Heathrow.

While waiting at the lounge, the Pakistan High Commissioner, Nasim Ahmed, a former journalist, came and told Bangabandhu, "Sir, I am here to welcome you. Please let me know what

we can do for you?"

"You have done enough, thank you very much," Bangabandhu replied.

Within a few minutes, Ian Sutherland had arrived and conveyed the British government's warm welcome to him.

He said that arrangements had been made for accommodation at Claridge's Hotel, where heads of state were normally accommodated.

Bangabandhu thanked him but asked if it would be possible to arrange his stay at a modest hotel in Russell Square, where he had stayed on earlier visits to London.

Sutherland replied, "Sir, this is the only thing I cannot arrange, because heads of state's security can only be provided at Claridge's Hotel. But we will see that any number of people who want to see you can do so, subject to security measures."

In the meantime, Rezaul Karim had arrived.

On his arrival, the Pakistani officials flying with Mujib saluted the undisputed leader of independence of Bangladesh and left the room, their job done.

Bangabandhu, as Rezaul Karim was to relate years later, declined to use the official limousine placed at his disposal by the British government and instead rode with Karim in his car.

Karim, who was driving through the cold winter morning, was both excited and alarmed. Excited because in an incredible way he had become the first Bangalee to have met his nation's leader for the first time since March 1971; alarmed because Bangabandhu kept asking him questions about the war and how Bangladesh had been liberated and Karim was afraid lest his car meet with an accident and cause fresh new tragedy. On their arrival at Claridge's Hotel,

Bangabandhu spoke to his family, Syed Nazrul Islam and Tajuddin Ahmad in Dhaka.

Syed Nazrul and Tajuddin informed that an aircraft to fly for London from Dhaka could be arranged but it would take at least two days for it to reach London.

They had also been informed that the people of India were extremely keen for a short stopover in Delhi and Kolkata, on the way to Dhaka.

At the hotel, a problem arose about how to accommodate requests of thousands of people to see Bangabandhu. It was then decided that groups of five persons will be allowed to visit him at a time.

Later, Bangabandhu addressed a crowded press conference at the hotel.

"Today, I am free to share the unbounded joy of freedom with my fellow countrymen. We have won the freedom in an epic liberation struggle," he said.

"The ultimate achievement of this struggle is the creation of an independent, sovereign, People's Republic of Bangladesh of which my people declared me as the President while I was a prisoner in a condemned cell awaiting the execution of a sentence of hanging."

He went on: "No people has had to pay as high a price in human life and suffering for the freedom that has been exerted from the people of Bangladesh. I cannot wait a single moment to return to my people."

His speech followed questions from journalists.

One of the journalists asked about how he felt after being held by West Pakistan and at any time were they considering executing him, Bangabandhu replied, "I was mentally

ready for that. A man who is ready to die, nobody can kill him, remember one thing."

Another newsman queried as to when he was aware that Bangladesh had been liberated, Bangabandhu said, "I am doing politics for about 35 years. The day I went to jail, I know whether I will be alive or not, my people of Bangladesh will be liberated; nobody can stop it."

In the evening, Bangabandhu met the then British Prime Minister, Edward Heath, at 10 Downing Street.

At the meeting, Bangabandhu raised the question of the British recognising Bangladesh as a sovereign country.

According to a declassified document of the US Department of State, Heath told the then US President, Richard Nixon, in a message on January 13, 1972, that "...he [Mujib] spoke with confidence and assurance. He was anxious to reach Dacca as soon as possible..."

"Mujib told me that there can now be no question of a formal link between Bangladesh and West Pakistan. He had said the same to Bhutto prior to his release. In this he has confirmed the position of the Bangladesh authorities in Dacca and our own assessment of the state of affairs in the East."

"However, although he spoke with understandable bitterness of the actions of the previous Pakistan regime, he showed no rancour towards Bhutto, and said that he wished to establish good relations with West Pakistan," reads the British Prime Minister's message for Nixon.

"The new partition should be, in his words, 'a parting of as brothers', but Bhutto had to acknowledge the division of Pakistan. Relations between the new Bangladesh and India would of course

be much closer," it said.

The declassified document also showed Bangabandhu spoke of his hope of Commonwealth membership and the British Premier assured him of their goodwill, but at the same time explained the reasons why they could not recognise Bangladesh at once.

"He shared our wish for harmonious relations between Britain and the three countries of the Indian sub-continent and he hoped that we would help to persuade Bhutto to accept the realities of the situation," it said.

When Heath asked Bangabandhu what else they could do for him, Bangabandhu's prompt reply was, "Yes, you can do one more favour, if you could kindly help us with a plane to take us to Bangladesh as soon as possible."

Bangabandhu returned to the hotel after the meeting. Calculations were made for the time it would take to reach Dhaka as Bangabandhu intended to reach Dhaka while there was still daylight.

And it was figured out that only one stopover was possible in India, if they were to arrive in Dhaka by 3:00pm. It was then decided that it would only be possible to stop over in Delhi.

The British Royal Air Force comet jet war ready to carry Bangabandhu home via Delhi. In the early morning of January 9, Bangabandhu was whisked away for the airport.

At about 6:00am, the British comet took off for Nicosia, for refuelling, en route to New Delhi for its final destination of Dhaka.

[The report is based on the autobiography of Dr Kamal Hossain titled "Bangladesh: Quest for Freedom and Justice"; an article of MM Rezaul Karim published in The Daily Star; and declassified documents of the US State Department]

No proof of electoral code violation

EC says after probing allegations against DNCC mayoral candidate Atiqul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission did not find any proof of violation of the electoral code of conduct by Awami League's Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral candidate Atiqul Islam.

DNCC Returning Officer Abul Kashem told The Daily Star yesterday that their investigation team did not find any authenticity of conducting election campaigns by Atiqul.

On Saturday, BNP's mayoral candidate Tabith Awal lodged a written complaint with the returning officer against him.

Meanwhile, the EC on Monday issued a show-cause notice to Atiqul over Tabith's allegation that the incumbent mayor opened an election camp in his electoral area.

The notice said Atiqul, along with a lawmaker, inaugurated the camp at Uttara on Sunday, which is a clear violation of the Election Code of Conduct Rules-2016.

The RO also asked Atiqul to come up with a written answer within the next two working days to explain why legal action would not be taken against him for violating the electoral code.

No candidates will be able to carry out electioneering before the allocation of electoral symbols, and no lawmakers and ministers are eligible to take part in the electioneering.

The elections to Dhaka south and north city corporations will be held on January 30. The last day for withdrawing candidacy is tomorrow.

Protests rage on

FROM PAGE 1

NHRC chief said the victim would be able to identify her rapist, if she saw him again.

Nasima demanded the culprit's immediate arrest and exemplary punishment.

She also praised the victim for showing intelligence by not removing any evidence and added that it should not be difficult to identify the rapist through DNA matching.

Asked about the victim, DMCH Director Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin said her condition improved yesterday. He also said she was being treated by a seven-member medical board.

The rape took place while the victim was walking from Kurmitola bus stop to a friend's house in nearby Sheora area around 7:30pm on Sunday. She had just got off a university bus.

The rapist grabbed her from behind, gagged her and took her to an isolated place nearby. She was raped and tortured there, said some of her friends, quoting her.

Her friends took her to the DMCH in the early hours of Monday.

As the day progressed, the DU erupted in protest. Hundreds of students, irrespective of their political affiliations, demonstrated throughout the day, demanding justice for the victim.

The victim's father filed a rape case with Cantonment Police Station. The case statements say the rapist also snatched the victim's cell phone and Tk 2,000.

THE PROTESTS

The protests continued yesterday. Students formed human chains, held protest rallies, and painted graffiti on roads to press home their demand.

Covering faces with black cloth, around 50 DU Bangla department students formed a human chain in front of Raju Memorial Sculpture on the campus around 10:30am.

They demanded capital punishment for the rapist and urged the university administration to ensure security for all its students.

Later around noon, students of the university's political science department formed a human chain there.

The demonstrators also burned an effigy of the rapist.

At another human chain nearby, members of different cultural organisations demanded immediate steps to ensure women's safety in the capital and elsewhere.

Fine Arts students painted graffiti on the street from near the gate of Ruqayyah Hall to Raju Memorial Sculpture in the TSC area.

During the protests, DU Chhatra League General Secretary Saddam Hussain, also assistant general secretary of Ducus, said they submitted a memorandum to Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan on Monday night, demanding that the culprit be identified in 24 hours.

He warned that they would march towards the home ministry if the rapist was not arrested soon.

Yesterday, hundreds of other students gathered near the Ruqayyah Hall. Many of them held placards demanding punishment for the culprit.

Meanwhile, four DU students, who went on a hunger strike on Monday demanding the rapist's arrest, withdrew the strike last night after DU Vice Chancellor Md Akhtaruzzaman assured them of immediate steps.

"If justice is not done, I myself will start a hunger strike," he told the students near the Raju Memorial Sculpture around 10:30pm.

At Jahangirnagar University, members of Chhatra League, left-leaning student organisations and quota reformists brought out separate processions on the campus, demanding justice for the DU student.

In Barishal, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front and Samajtantrik Mahila Forum formed a human chain in front of Ashwini Kumar Hall in the city.

Students in Narayanganj also formed human chain in several places of the city.

WHY DO RAPISTS GO SCOT-FREE?

SARA HOSSAIN
Supreme Court Lawyer

Despite so many decades of women's organisations pointing out that there is an impunity for rapists, there are still cover-ups not only by police but also the authorities concerned. It is very depressing to see that, yet again, people have to take to the streets just to ensure there is a response from the authorities concerned. That should be something that we can take for granted.

It's not enough to say that there are laws and there are institutions if we repeatedly see that the laws are not implemented and the institutions don't function when these incidents of extreme sexual violence occur.

I think that there is a lack of response from the authorities to exercise their responsibilities to ensure that the laws and institutions work. That's why citizens keep on taking to the streets to demand justice because without that loud voice, without the pressure for accountability, national institutions are simply not accountable to the people and as a result those who are responsible for sexual violence escape justice time and again.

SAMINA LUTHFA
Associate Professor of Sociology at the DU

Law enforcement agencies must ensure the safety of the citizens so that everyone has a sense of security instead of fear while on the streets.

The victim is a young student. However, against all odds, she was brave enough to file a complaint with the police, whereas many a time such crimes go unreported due to the social stigma attached to sexual violence and the harassment that follows it. She knew that staying silent was not the answer. We demand the criminal in question be brought to book immediately and served an exemplary punishment so as to discourage such heinous acts in the future. At the same time, we would urge the government to help eradicate what has become a culture of rape through education and intensive awareness programmes to ensure a society that prioritises gender equality. As rape is about the exertion of power, we need to abolish the mindset of domination and control in perpetrators first and foremost. Perhaps then, a sense of safety and security will prevail.

TAHSEEN NOWER PRACHI
DU student and anti-rape demonstrator

The bus route where this incident occurred is one that I, and other students, regularly use. The issue is not that this incident would not have happened had the bus stop been in a different place. The issue is that a girl was raped.

Everyone seems to be involved in blaming each other, getting distracted from blaming the person actually responsible – the rapist. What I have seen in the protests is that everyone is invested in ensuring the girl gets justice; however, we seem to be getting side-tracked. Seventy-two hours have passed but we still haven't gotten the name of the rapist.

We are not organising this protest because the victim was a DU student, we are doing it for all the girls out there. This is no specific institution's problem, because rape is rape, no matter where, no matter against whom.

The protest we are organising consists of ordinary students. We want the students' voices to raise the question, "Whose fault is it really?"

We want people to know that we want this to stop.

Chattogram

FROM PAGE 1

Gayle's past records in the BPL, the crowd would have hoped for a blistering innings from the West Indian, who was playing his first match of the edition for Chattogram yesterday. However, it was his fellow West Indian Simmons who hit a brilliant 43-ball 51 to help Chattogram get a flying start in chase of a challenging 166 for eight posted by Rajshahi.

Gayle did spark a few chants and cheers from the crowd as he struck three sixes and a solitary four before being dismissed for a 10-ball 23 in the fifth over. After that, it was Simmons and in-form batsman Imrul who strung together a 77-run second-wicket stand to help Chattogram assert their dominance. Even though Simmons was dismissed in the 13th over, Imrul remained unbeaten for a blazing 41-ball 67 to help Chattogram coast to victory with nine balls to spare.

Earlier, Rajshahi Royals opener Liton Das, who has been in a good form, picked up his second fifty as the right-hander helped Rajshahi get off to a decent start. Liton looked exquisite for his 45-ball 56 as he strung together a crucial 41-run third-wicket stand with all-rounder Shoaib Malik after Rajshahi had lost two for 53 inside eight overs.

The 25-year-old saw his innings, which included five boundaries and two maximums, end when he miscued a Ziaur Rahman delivery and was caught by Nurul Hasan in the 13th over. However, Malik's 24-ball 28 and a quickfire eight-ball 21-run cameo from all-rounder Forhad Reza ensured Rajshahi finish with a challenging score on the board. For Chattogram, pacer Rubel Hossain remained the pick of their bowlers, returning impressive figures of three for 20 while Ziaur also impressed with three for 18 in three overs.

3 schoolboys held for raping classmate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday detained three boys including son of a municipal ward councillor for allegedly raping a girl in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila on Monday.

The accused are class-IX students of a school in the upazila, said police.

Khairul Islam, officer-in-charge of Godagari Police Station, said the accused and the victim used to go to the same coaching centre.

On Monday afternoon, the councillor's son with the other two took the girl to visit his home, said the OC, adding that no one was present at the house during that time.

While they were gossiping in the house, one of the boys locked the room they were in, and allegedly raped the girl, said police.

The other two including the councillor's son helped him with the crime, police added.

Police detained the three after midnight following a case filed by the victim's mother in the night, said OC Khairul.

The accused will be sent to correction centre through court, he said.

US will send some Mexican asylum seekers to Guatemala

AFP, Washington

Mexicans seeking asylum in the United States could be deported to Guatemala, part of a controversial migration deal between the Central American nation and Washington, the US Department of Homeland Security told AFP Monday.

The agreement designated Guatemala a "safe third country" -- allowing US authorities to deport some El Salvadoran and Honduran asylum seekers there -- and was condemned by international human rights groups.