

# Mujib Borsho celebrations begin

## Fireworks light up night sky

AGENCIES

The birth centenary celebrations of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman kicked off yesterday.

President Abdul Hamid inaugurated the celebrations in a nationwide televised speech.

The celebrations began with fireworks at different venues across the country, including Suhrawardy Udyan, the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad, Awami League Bangabandhu Avenue central office, Rabindra Sarobar, Hatirjheel and TSC area in the capital, at 8:00pm to mark the moment when Bangabandhu was born on March 17, 1920.

The inaugural ceremony titled "Muktit Mohanayak" (Great Hero of Freedom) was aired on all TV channels of Bangladesh after the fireworks, reports UNB.

Opening the show, 100 children sang the National Anthem, and Dhonno Mujib Dhonno, a song dedicated to the Father of the Nation.

Later, 100 renowned Bangladeshi singers performed the theme song of "Mujib Borsho" along with Bangabandhu's youngest daughter Sheikh Rehana.

Rehana also gave a brief statement which was followed by recitation of a poem titled "Baba" written by her younger sister Sheikh Hasina.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy orchestrated a special performance to portray Bangabandhu's eventful life through a 45-minute theatrical choreographic performance on the life of Bangabandhu titled "Shotabdir Mahanayak", featuring 1,000 artistes.

The National Children's Day was also observed yesterday marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu.

The government declared the period from March 17, 2020, to March 26, 2021 as the "Mujib Borsho" marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu. Along with Bangladesh, the Mujib Borsho" is being celebrated globally with the initiative of

Unesco.

The government had chalked out various programmes to be observed throughout the year.

However, the programmes have been rescheduled following the detection of coronavirus in Bangladesh.

The grand inaugural ceremony, which was scheduled to be held at the National Parade Ground yesterday, has been postponed and it will be held later.

The national flag and party's flag were hoisted atop all party offices across the country in the morning.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid tributes to the Father of the Nation at Bangabandhu Museum in the capital's Dhanmondi and at Bangabandhu Mausoleum in Gopalganj's Tungipara.

President Abdul Hamid paid homage to Bangabandhu by placing wreath at his mausoleum in Tungipara.

Besides, special prayers were offered at all mosques, temples, and churches across the country.

Television and radio broadcast special programmes marking the day.

BSS adds: marking the "Mujib Borsho", Bangladesh Bank issued regular currency notes and commemorative notes of Tk 200 yesterday.

Besides, the central bank also issued Tk 100 denomination commemorative gold and silver coins and Tk 100 commemorative notes.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in Tungipara village of Gopalganj on March 17, 1920. While studying at Islamia College in Kolkata, he got involved in active politics.

Both while in and out of jail, Bangabandhu had led the Language Movement. On February 21, 1952, when Language Movement activists were killed, Bangabandhu was observing a hunger strike in jail.

In continuation of the Language Movement, all major movements of the Bengalees, including the Liberation War in 1971, were led by the Father of the Nation.



President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stand in silence after placing wreaths at Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's mausoleum in Tungipara on the occasion of Bangabandhu's 100th birth anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## 'Sonar Bangla' not far away

FROM PAGE 1

yourself as worthy citizens so that you can move to keep your head high as an independent nation," she said in her speech.

Hasina also urged the young generation to develop their life with the ideals of Bangabandhu and love the people as he did.

She extended the greetings of the Mujib Borsho to all the citizens of Bangladesh living at home and abroad as well as all the people of the world.

The celebrations started with fireworks at 8:00pm at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan.

Recalling the dedications and sacrifices Bangabandhu made for the wellbeing of the people of this country, the PM said he gifted this country

named Bangladesh. "He had given the Bengalees the dignity of identity as a nation."

The PM said the world has come to know about Bangladesh following the great sacrifices of Bangabandhu. "Today, your [Bangabandhu's] birth centenary is being celebrated not only in Bangladesh but also across the world," she said.

President Abdul Hamid said the ideals of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will inspire the new generation to contribute to the nation-building.

He said the new generation will be able to know about the life and works of Bangabandhu by reading two of his books -- The Unfinished Memoirs and

Karagarer Rojnamcha (Diary in Jail) -- and other books written on him.

And thus they will be able to contribute to the nation-building process after being inspired by the ideology of Bangabandhu.

"His ideal will remain as our source of eternal inspiration... Let the principle and ideals of Bangabandhu spread from generation to generation," he said.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Nepal's President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, Bhutanese Prime Minister Dr Lotay Tshering, UN Secretary-General Antonio

Guterres and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation Secretary-General Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimeen greeted Bangladesh yesterday, BSS reports.

Modi said deep-rooted relations between Dhaka and New Delhi are based on shared heritage, legacy and inspiration of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding father of Bangladesh.

He described Bangabandhu as one of the greatest figures of the last century, and said, "India has always been attached to his ideals and values."

"Life of Bangabandhu gives a great message to the world of 21st century," he added.

The Indian PM recalled how Bangabandhu devoted every moment of his life towards bringing Bangladesh out of the phase of devastation and genocide and making it into a positive and progressive society.

## Global death toll

FROM PAGE 1

confined to northern regions, where the virus first started spreading around cities such as Milan.

The Italian financial capital's Lombardy region recorded 1,420 deaths, of 66 percent of Italy's total -- about the same share it has had throughout the crisis.

But the neighbouring Piedmont region around Turin, which is home to the Italian auto industry, has seen its number of deaths and infections nearly double in two days.

WE ARE AT WAR

In a sombre address to the nation, French President Emmanuel Macron ordered the French to stay at home for 15 days from midday yesterday, following similar measures by other European countries.

"We are at war, a public health war certainly. We are fighting not against an army or another nation. But the enemy is there, invisible and elusive and on the move," he said.

Most shops, restaurants and tourist sites in the world's most visited country are already shuttered, but in some areas desperate shoppers crowded supermarkets before the new rules took effect.

About 1,00,000 police and gendarmes will be out on the streets to enforce the measures, after Macron warned violations would be punished.

Germany banned gatherings in churches, mosques and synagogues and said playgrounds and non-essential shops would close.

## Biman rescues 409

FROM PAGE 1

with the special permission of the Saudi Civil Aviation Authority and the Saudi government, said a Biman official yesterday.

Sources at Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh said they would request the Saudi authorities to allow Biman to operate more such flights to bring back the rest of the stranded Bangladeshis in Saudi Arabia.

A staff member of a foreign airlines currently stranded in Saudi Arabia said they came to Saudi Arabia on a flight on March 15 and were supposed to return to Dhaka on the return flight the following day.

"But I, along with several of my colleagues, is now stuck in Jeddah for the last three days as Saudi authorities halted air communication with Dhaka. We are running short of money and we are not sure when we will be able to return home," the staff member, who wished to remain anonymous, said.

Aminur Rashid, another Bangladeshi who has been stuck in Saudi Arabia following the halt in air travel between the countries, said there are 15 people in their group who came to Saudi Arabia to perform umrah.

"We are running out of money and we are not sure when flights on the Saudi Arabia-Dhaka route will resume," he said.

Dr Shahriar Sajjad, a doctor at the health desk of HSEA, said yesterday that after the 409 passengers are screened for the virus, they will be asked to stay in self-quarantine for 14 days in their respective houses.

"But if any passengers are found with high fever and other symptoms of coronavirus, they will be sent to

Russia's President Vladimir Putin yesterday said the situation with the spreading coronavirus is "under control" in the country, after infections were "contained."

Britain ramped up its response to the escalating outbreak after the government imposed unprecedented peacetime measures prompted by scientific advice that infections and deaths would spiral without drastic action.

More firms in the country sent staff to work from home and public transport emptied after the government called for an end to "non-essential" social contact and unnecessary travel as confirmed COVID-19 cases climbed to more than 1,500 and deaths rose to 55.

India closed the Taj Mahal, its principal tourist site, and the financial hub of Mumbai ordered offices providing non-essential services to keep half their staff at home in increased measures to curb the coronavirus in South Asia.

Mumbai, a metropolis of 18 million people, also authorised hospital and airport authorities to stamp wrists of those ordered to self-isolate with indelible ink reading "Home Quarantined" and displaying the date the quarantine ends.

A patient there died after contracting the virus yesterday, Praveen Pardeshi, who heads Mumbai's civic body, told Reuters. It was the third death in India.

Pakistan reported the number of confirmed cases had more than doubled for a second consecutive day, reaching 195.

Ashkona Hajj Camp for further health investigation," he added.

BIMAN SUSPENDS MALAYSIA

FLIGHT

Meanwhile, with the suspension of flights to Kuala Lumpur from today, Biman has now forced to stop flights to 11 destinations out of a total of 17 over the last two weeks.

Biman's Deputy General Manager of public relations, Tahera Khandaker, told The Daily Star that the national flag carrier will stop its operations in Kuala Lumpur from March 18 due to the Malaysian government's decision to ban air travel with different countries, including Bangladesh, to stop the spread of coronavirus in the country.

Biman earlier suspended its operations in 10 destinations -- Dammam, Riyadh, Jeddah, Medina, Kolkata, Delhi, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and Kathmandu.

In one month from February 28, the national airliner was forced to cancel at least 330 international flights on different routes, said Tahera.

Biman has so far incurred a loss of Tk 270 crore in the last two months, she added.

TWO FOREIGNERS SENT BACK

Two foreign nationals -- one from the United States and another from Ivory Coast -- who landed at HSEA early yesterday were sent back to their respective countries as they did not have visas.

"We sent them back on the same airline [on which they arrived]," said Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul-Ahsan, director of HSEA.

On March 15, the government of Bangladesh cancelled on-arrival visas till March 31.

## Virus can cause havoc in Rohingya camps

FROM PAGE 1

said they were raising awareness in the camps and monitoring the situation.

"We have banned new foreigners from entering the camps and are discouraging aid workers from entering the camps unless it is extremely necessary," he said.

Besides, Rohingya community leaders are going door to door and advising everyone to maintain cleanliness and basic hygiene in the camps.

Razia Sultana, a Rohingya lawyer, educator and human rights activist, said they were engaging women to educate families about maintaining basic hygiene.

"Rohingya women mostly stay at home and look after their families. They are now educating their family members to wash their hands at least three to four times a day," she said.

Yassin Abdumonaab, inhabitant of Kutupalong camp and a teacher by profession, said announcements were made describing the symptoms of coronavirus infection and preventive measures.

Meanwhile, Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital set up a five-bed isolation ward if anyone is found to be Covid-19 infected.

Two 50-bed isolation wards were also established in Ramu and Chakaria upazila health centres.

However, none of these wards have "negative air pressure", a technique to allow airflow inside the wards.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

ACCORDING TO GLOBAL

GUIDELINES?

There is a need to routinely and randomly test people from different communities to get the real picture, experts say.

Prof Muzaherul Huq, former regional advisor of WHO's South East Asia region, said, "What happened in China, South Korea, and other countries is an indication that there are 10-15 times more patients than reported."

"The government should take more drastic measures. We need strict monitoring to ensure proper quarantine. There should be arrangements to treat people at facilities and Intensive Care Units should be prepared."

SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES

MAY OCCUR  
According to MSF spokesperson Tariq, aid workers are also apprehensive about a future shortage of medical supplies.

There is global pressure on the production of some medical supplies, particularly on specialised personal protective equipment for healthcare workers, he said.

"Our projects are still able to continue medical activities, but ascertaining future supplies of certain key items -- such as surgical masks, swabs, and gloves -- is of concern. There is also a risk of supply shortages due to lack of production of generic drugs and difficulties in importing

## 'No spread yet at community level'

FROM PAGE 1

contracted the virus from one of his relatives who recently travelled to Bangladesh from the US and left.

Three of the 10 have recovered while the others are under treatment, said Prof Flora.

She also said the IEDCR tested 326 suspected patients for coronavirus till yesterday.

Forty-nine were tested in the last 24 hours till 7:15pm, said an IEDCR press release.

Replying to a query, Flora said they carried out the tests on 20 atypical pneumonia patients in line with WHO protocol to determine the spread of coronavirus at the country's community level.

This claim, however, contradicts the WHO protocol itself, experts have pointed out.

To get a clearer picture, they said, the authorities should intensify collection of random samples from people showing flu-like symptoms, even if they did not visit any of the coronavirus-hit countries.

"Testing only 20 samples of atypical pneumonia cases is not enough to know the level of community transmission in the country. Besides, these tests are not being done maintaining standard procedures," Prof Mahmudur Rahman, a former director of IEDCR, told The Daily Star yesterday.

essential drugs (such as antibiotics and antiretroviral drugs) due to lockdowns, reduced production of basic products, exportation stops or repurposing or stocking of drugs and material for Covid-19."

Amidst a global shortage of supplies for Covid-19 preparedness and response, WHO says that they have been accelerating their preparations to tackle a potential outbreak.

"However, requirements were pre-empting, supplies have been already prepositioned and more already have been ordered. Coordination amongst partners is underway on having supplies stocked to be made available as and when required," said WHO's Bangladesh spokesperson Catalin.

International organisations are also providing training to their staff members and community medical workers stationed in Cox's Bazar. Community health workers, medical professionals, and aid workers are being trained on Infection Prevention and Control in accordance with WHO guidelines.

"Preparedness measures have been put in place and a National Response Plan has been completed by the government," said UNHCR's Mostafa.

"Furthermore, humanitarian agencies are finalising a multi-sector response plan and a specific health sector response plan in Cox's Bazar, in support with the government."

"It is not systematic. It seemed the tests were done following a passive method. It should have been the active method."

By an active method, he meant collection of samples in a planned way from atypical pneumonia patients from across the country.

According to WHO protocol, there should be more tests of atypical pneumonia to know whether the virus has actually spread to communities, he said.

"No test is being done if there is no travel history [of visiting the affected countries]," he said, suggesting randomly testing anyone with symptoms like cough, fever and respiratory difficulties, even if they haven't come from abroad or had no direct contact with them.

Currently, 19 hospitals across the country have influenza surveillance system where different pneumonia cases, including atypical pneumonia, have been analysed since 2007.

The Daily Star could not confirm the number of atypical pneumonia cases reported from those hospitals.

The National Influenza Centre at the IEDCR also does not have any updated data, said its sources.

Meanwhile, at a press conference in Geneva yesterday, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom urged all countries to test all suspected cases for detecting coronavirus.

## Egypt quarantines 300 families in village after virus deaths

AFP, Cairo

Egypt has placed over 300 families under quarantine in a Delta village to stem the spread of the new coronavirus after two deaths were recorded this month originating from the area.

"We have confined more than 300 families to their homes where they will remain in quarantine," Health Minister Hala Zayed told late-night television host Amr Adib on Monday.

Without naming the village in Daqahliya governorate, 150 kilometres (90 miles) north of Cairo in the fertile Delta, she explained that "cleansing procedures" were undertaken to prevent further infections and that other "touristic" governorates would also be shut down in coming days.

The "heightened" measures come after Egypt recorded two new deaths, with the toll now rising to four.

The health ministry said Monday that an Egyptian man aged 50 died after coming into contact with a 72-year-old woman, who succumbed on March 12 from COVID-19, hailing from the same Daqahliya village now under quarantine.

The other death was of a German man, 72, in Luxor, the site of coronavirus cases originating on a Nile cruise boat that was later quarantined.

Egypt's total confirmed virus cases stands at 166 after the ministry reported 40 new cases, 35 of them Egyptians and five foreigners of various nationalities.

The country said it would suspend all flights starting Thursday until the end of the month to try to reduce the rate of infections from the global outbreak.

Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly urged Egyptians on Monday to "stay put" in their homes and avoid "panic shopping", saying the state had ample reserves of food items and other basic products.

## Doubt cast over

FROM PAGE 1

office in the capital's Agargaon after cutting a cake to celebrate the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"We didn't make any decision yet... as preparations are in the final stage." The CEC added that the candidates told the commission that they would campaign carefully.

On Monday, the government announced that all educational institutions would remain closed from yesterday to March 31 as a preventive measure against possible spread of the novel coronavirus in the country.

Besides, the authorities of Bangladesh Motion Picture Exhibitors Association said all cinemas across the country would be shut down from March 18 to April 2.

The Ministry for Youth and Sports suspended all domestic and international games and sports events until April 30 and March 31 respectively.