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49 YEARS OF VICTORY Nation renews resolve to uproot fundamentalism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation yesterday celebrated Victory Day, saluting the supreme sacrifice of the gallant sons and daughters of the soil and vowing afresh to uproot fundamentalism.

There were restrictions on public gatherings due to the pandemic, but the virus scare could not dampen the spirit as hundreds of people, irrespective of age and gender, gathered at memorials across the country.

Imbued with the spirit of the Liberation War, they paid rich tributes to the freedom fighters who had unflinchingly sacrificed their lives to translate the national dream of an independent motherland into reality.

Forty-nine years ago on December 16, 1971, Bangladesh was liberated under the leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and after the sacrifice of the lives of three million people.

On this day, the Pakistan Army surrendered to the allied forces of Bangladesh and India in the capital's

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A man helps his children put on headbands marking the Victory Day at the TSC of Dhaka University as the nation celebrated its victory anniversary yesterday. However, there were fewer outdoor celebrations because of the coronavirus restrictions.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

PRESERVING LIBERATION WAR SITES Project hamstrung by land issues

Less than a third of the work completed;
3-year time limit ended in June

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Three years ago, the government undertook a project to preserve the sites bearing historic value of the Liberation War for future generations to learn about the country's tumultuous birth.

The Liberation War ministry chose 360 sites -- including killing fields of the Pakistani army, meeting places of freedom fighters and combat zones -- in 293 upazilas to construct 284 memorials and 76 museums at a cost of Tk 179 crore.

The first deadline for the project was in June this year, but the ministry has been able to finish less than a third of the work by the time, mainly because of complications over land. The project was extended by two more years and, consequently, the cost too went up to Tk 206 crore, according to project officials.

As of November this year, physical work at only 104 sites -- 99 memorials and 5 museums -- have been completed, say project officials.

"During project designing, there was an estimate of the amount of land that would be needed. But when project officials went to the sites, they were confused as to whether these were khas lands or private property," said Tapan Kanti Ghosh, secretary of the Liberation War Affairs Ministry.

"The project officials needed administrative approval to acquire the lands, which was time consuming. Besides, the coronavirus pandemic hampered the work for several months," he told The Daily Star.

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Stay firm on non-communal spirit of 1971

PM says at Victory
Day discussion

BSS, Dhaka

Reiterating her call to the people to stay firm on the non-communal spirit of the Liberation War, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said people of all religious faiths would live in the country with equal rights.

"All people had collectively liberated the country, sacrificing their blood... Everyone will have the freedom of practising their respective religious rituals as we believe in this spirit and Islam also teaches us that lesson," she said.

Hasina was addressing a Victory Day discussion, organised by Awami League, at its central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital. She joined the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

The premier said, "People of all religions -- Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Buddhist -- will live on this soil. Being a Muslim majority country, we will not neglect other religions."

She also mentioned that Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) has given us that lesson.

"I will tell all of you that any situation has to be tackled with patience. We will

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HASINA-MODI VIRTUAL SUMMIT TODAY Talks to focus on water sharing, connectivity

2 PMs to open Chilahati-Haldibari rail link after 55yrs

PORIMOL PALMA, JAGARAN
CHAKMA and PALLAB
BHATTACHARYA

Water sharing and management of trans-boundary rivers will dominate today's Bangladesh-India summit to be led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, said officials.

Quick implementation of the projects under Indian Line of Credit (LoC), Covid-19 vaccine cooperation, regional connectivity and border security will be among other important agendas from the Bangladesh side, they said.

On Sunday, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said, "We will raise all the big issues, including water and border security, at the virtual summit."

Meanwhile, a diplomatic source in Delhi said Dhaka would push for the signing of Teesta Water Sharing Agreement that has been pending for long, and seek Indian support for Rohingya repatriation as failure in this regard could create regional instability.

During the summit, the two countries are scheduled to sign at least five MoUs -- Trans-boundary Elephant Conservation to Preserve Biodiversity; Framework Agreement on High Impact Community Development Projects; Barishal Sewerage Treatment



Plant; Framework Understanding on Cooperation in Hydrocarbon Sector, and Joint Study on Technology Transfer.

The two premiers will also inaugurate some projects, including Chilahati-Haldibari rail link, which remained unused for 55 years, some "high impact projects" being implemented with Indian assistance, and launch of a commemorative postal stamp and Bangabandhu-Bapu Digital Museum, highlighting the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence.

"The victory of Bangladesh is also the victory of India. India helped us in the war of 1971 against Pakistan. Their soldiers sacrificed their lives. Our relation is time-tested," Momen said.

A foreign ministry official said the summit between the two countries is very significant as it happens during the celebrations marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and as Bangladesh prepares for the 50th anniversary of its independence next year.

Indian premier Modi, who could not attend the birth centenary event in Dhaka in March this

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WHO's Covid vaccine scheme risks failure

Internal documents say no shots for poorer
nations until 2024

REUTERS, Brussels

The global scheme to deliver Covid-19 vaccines to poorer countries faces a "very high" risk of failure, potentially leaving nations home to billions of people with no access to vaccines until as late as 2024, internal documents said.

The World Health Organization's COVAX programme is the main global scheme to vaccinate people in poor and

middle income countries around the world against the coronavirus. It aims to deliver at least 2 billion vaccine doses by the end of 2021 to cover 20% of the most vulnerable people in 91 poor and middle-income countries, mostly in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

But in internal documents reviewed by Reuters, the scheme's promoters say the programme is struggling from a

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For many people, the only purpose of carrying a mask is to avoid being fined by officials. The repeated calls for using masks to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus did not amount to much for them as they don't properly put on masks when there are no law enforcers around. The photos were taken on the capital's Abdul Gani Road recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Demand for ICU beds on the rise

27 more die from
Covid

MOUDD AHMED SUJAN

As the number of Covid-19 infections has been rising since November, the demand for ICU beds at hospitals in the capital has almost doubled.

In Chattogram city, the same trend was also noticed.

Physicians said the number of critical patients is increasing, while public health experts said it is happening due to the rising number of infections with the arrival of winter.

In the week from December 10, on an average 62 ICU beds remained vacant daily in 19 Covid-19 hospitals or hospital units in Dhaka city, according to the information based on press releases of the Directorate General of Health Services.

During the same period last month (November 10-16), the average number of ICU bed vacancy was 119 daily.

There are a total of 288 ICU beds in the Covid-19 dedicated hospitals in Dhaka city. Of them, 113 are in 10 government hospitals and 175 in nine private facilities.

During the seven-day period from December 3-9, 82 ICU beds remained vacant daily, on average.

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REMEMBERING WITH CRORES OF TRIBUTE

Alhaj S M Nazrul Islam (1928-2017)



Founder Chairman, Walton Group

We still can't believe that you are no more with us. Honor comes eventually in mind with the name Alhaj S M Nazrul Islam, Founder Chairman, Walton Group, Pioneer in Electrical, Electronics, Home, Kitchen and Electrical Appliances & Automobiles manufacturing industry in Bangladesh, who breathed his last leaving us in deep sorrow on 17th December, 2017. With his demise we have lost a Visionary Leader, an Inventor, a Pioneer and an Earnest Guardian of this industry. Inspired by his ethics, values and morals, Walton is going ahead in its own glory at both home and abroad. We constantly sense his presence following the footsteps he has left for us to follow. His demise is something we can never recover from but we wish from the bottom of our hearts that his departed soul be granted Jannah where it finds eternal peace.

In reverence & remembrance -

Walton Family

