

Hasina, Rehana thank BBC listeners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, two surviving daughters of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have expressed profound gratitude to the nation and millions of BBC listeners for recognising their father as the greatest Bengali ever.

Sheikh Hasina while addressing a *Pahela Boishakh* gathering and Sheikh Rehana in her reaction to the UNB gratefully acknowledge the way people saluted Bangabandhu.

A grand procession observing the *Pahela Boishakh*, the Bengali New Year, brought out on Wednesday by the main opposition Awami League (AL) and its front organisations eventually turned into a celebrating parade to rejoice the recognition of Bangabandhu as the greatest Bengali of all-time. The gorgeously decorated procession marched through the city streets, from Bahadur Shah Park in Old Dhaka to Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhamondi.

When the procession reached Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, Sheikh Hasina, AL Chief and also the Opposition Leader, in an emotion-choked voice said, "Sheikh Mujib is the name of a history, an ideal, a noble sacrifice, an independent Bangladesh and a proud nation," adding that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib earned Bengali the long-cherished independence and thus established it as the proudest

nation on earth.

"Today history once again established the truth... and proved that history speaks—and speaks the truth," she said.

"Bangabandhu is a name engraved so deep on the heart of every Bengali that it can never be erased as long as independence is there, as long as the Bengali nation is there," Hasina continued.

Yet, she alleged, for the last 29 years anti-liberation elements made futile efforts to blot out the name of Bangabandhu.

Sheikh Rehana, the younger daughter of Bangabandhu, in her reaction to the UNB on Wednesday from London extended her grateful thanks to the BBC listeners for honouring Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman as the greatest Bengali of all-time.

"I am extremely happy... It has proved again that history determines one's place, as one deserves," she said.

Carrying portraits of Bangabandhu and the opposition leader Sheikh Hasina and waving scores of miniature national flags, people in a jubilant mood chanted slogans for Bangabandhu and Sheikh Hasina while elephants, horse-carts decorated in vibrant colours, and vans made the procession look splendid. Wearing paper-caps, many of them exchanged colour to celebrate the BBC listeners' selection.

4 of a family drown in Kushiyara river

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Four members of a family drowned in a boat capsized in the river Kushiyara yesterday.

A motorised boat with about 40 passengers overturned in the river in stormy weather at around 4:00pm when it was sailing towards Hossainpur and Tahirpur villages from Balaganj, locals said.

Bashanti Rani Sutradhar, 35, wife of Prabindra Sutradhar of Zahirpur village under Rajnagar upazila of Moulvibazar, her daughters Jolly Sutradhar, 7, and seven-month-old Bashanti and their distant relative Prafullabala Sutradhar, 90, drowned in the water. However, other passengers swam ashore, they added.

Locals recovered the bodies of Bashanti, Jolly and Prafullabala, but the seven-month-old girl's body was yet to be traced till 6:00pm, police said.

The family went to Balaganj upazila headquarters to consult a physician there, police added.

53 killed

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adds: Three idyllic villages in Sadar upazila stood in matchwood as one of the giant tornadoes with wind speeds of 120km an hour tore through the area for 20 minutes from 7:45pm, killing 35 people.

The twister, accompanied by hails, flattened about 7,000 houses, levelled trees, knocked down electric poles and rained debris on people running for cover after house collapse.

The dead, largely fatally hit by flying corrugated iron roofs, included Golam Hossain, 30, Sathi, 5, Mukta, 40, Haji Akhtarruddin, 60, Rupchand, 16, Bakul, 25, Faruq, 8, Nur Jahan, 40, Asia, 75, Harun, 10, Alpana, 25, Jaheda, 14, Kajal, 20, Jubed Ali, 22, Noor Jahan, 40, and Adam Khan, 65.

Our Mymensingh correspondent adds: At least 18 people, including nine women and three children, were killed and 400 others injured when the tornado ripped through four villages in Haluaghat upazila.

The dead included Aklima, 12, Jit Ali, 42, his daughter Tahera Khatun, 5, Anju Ara Khatun, Selina Khatun, 30, Mansura, 2, Shila, 4, Banesa, 20, Julmat Ali, 40, Abeng Deo, 35, Selina Azim, 20, Mohila Azim, 40, Pahela Patra, 20, Dr Gazi Shamsul Huda, 30, and Zithi Kuda, 65.

Police said the violent twister, unheard of in the living memory in the area, razed over 300 houses to the ground in Gazir Bhita, Balmara, Sumergulia Para and Surjupur villages.

"I have never seen such a monster twister rumble through our village," said 60-year-old Abdur Rahim of village Sumergulia.

"Most villagers are living in the open in the wake of the disaster. They are in dire need of food, shelter and medicine. The authorities should rush relief in the flattened villages," a villager said.

Russell Ahmed, a college student of the neighbourhood, said the death count could have climbed higher if people from neighbouring villages did not come to the rescue of the injured.

Our Moulvibazar correspondent adds: A nor'wester lashed four villages in Rajnagar upazila in the district, leaving 60 people injured and 450 houses damaged.

Over 300 people, injured in the tornadoes, are undergoing treatment in Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) and 400 others in Netrakona Sadar Hospital

Bagerhat UP chairmen seek security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Some union parishad (UP) chairmen of Bagerhat district yesterday asked the government to ensure security for their lives in the face of recent threats from underground operatives.

Addressing a press briefing in Khulna, Fakir Tarikul Islam, chairman of Shatgambuj UP and president of Bagerhat chapter of National Union Parishad Forum, said development works at 75 unions of the district are being hampered as the chairmen are working under constant threat from local outlaws.

He also criticised the government move to amend the constitution for appointment of civil servants at the UP body after the present chairmen expire their term in office. He also urged the members of parliament to stop interfering into UP affairs.

Fakir also placed their 13-point suggestion for strengthening the local government body. The suggestions include firearms issuing licence for the UP heads, providing them power to lease out local markets, water bodies, ferry ghat to generate more income and amending the UP Ordinance 1983.

Khan Zahid Hasan, chairman of Fakirhat Sadar UP, was also present in the press conference.

High costs

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The Jetro, which has 76 overseas offices including one in Dhaka, is an organisation of the Japanese government established for promoting trade and investment. It is the 14th survey of Japan on 'Investment-Related Cost Comparison' in 26 cities of 16 major Asian countries.

According to the results of the survey, Bangladesh is in an advantageous position in respect of cost of gas and office rent. The wage of workers in Dhaka is also the second cheapest after Yangon. But, the salary of the mid-level managers is higher than that of Yangon but also of Shenyang and Chongqing of central China. And the cost of electricity in Dhaka is almost similar to that in Beijing, Seoul and Hanoi.

Analysing the survey findings, Nishikawa says, "The wage of workers in Bangladesh is the second cheapest in Asia. But, a foreign investors considers not only the wage of workers but also the cost of electricity, water, transport, telecommunication, taxation, etc for an overall evaluation before he can make the decision."

Stating that foreign investment is definitely essential for economic development of Bangladesh, Nishikawa prescribes, "For attracting foreign investors to come to Bangladesh without going to China, Vietnam or the ASEAN countries, it is essential to make the investment climate much more attractive than that prevailing in those countries."

The Jetro representative recommends for the Bangladesh government to take up the following four measures "to make the [country's] investment climate attractive."

Firstly, he suggests to lower those costs found in the survey as comparatively higher than other countries, as "an enterprise will always invest in a country where the return of investment is high."

The second suggestion is for continuity of policy matters. "An investment is always made on long-term considerations and, therefore, it is never desirable that a policy is changed thoughtlessly or a project in progress is suddenly cancelled due to policy change, especially due to the change of power from one political party to another."

The third one is improvement of infrastructural facilities. For example, ensuring a steady supply of electricity at a reduced cost.

The fourth recommendation is for instituting fairness and speed in approvals given by different government departments.

Nishikawa concludes by saying, "We should also remember that attracting foreign investment will involve competition with other Asian countries. The competitors are always earnestly trying among themselves to secure a bigger chunk of the foreign investment by providing special incentives to the potential investors. Therefore, the government of Bangladesh should, of course, study about the investment-related costs and the incentives prevailing in other Asian countries and then create a very attractive investment climate in this country."

The storms presented a drag on the production of boro in Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Netrakona, Naogaon, Bogra, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Rajshahi, Sirajganj, Sunamganj and Moulvibazar districts. The crop showed signs of good harvest this year.

PM

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Khaleda said the members of the armed forces received appreciation from all quarters for their role in relief and rehabilitation work, implementing housing projects, ensuring security of important installations, assisting the civil administration in curbing criminal acts and in the UN peacekeeping missions.

She wished continued success of the 21st Infantry Brigade and hoped that it would be turned into a strong pillar of Bangladesh Armed Forces through hard work, continuous training, patriotism and discipline.

Information Minister Tarikul Islam, Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Selima Rahman, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Mosaddak Ali, Chief of the Naval Staff Rear Admiral Shah Iqbal Mujtaba and Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshall Fakhrul Azam were present.

Officials said the boro output would largely depend on the frequency and ferocity of tornadoes and nor'westers in the next two years.

Despite a prolonged drought-like situation at an earlier stage of boro ripening season and power crisis-induced irrigation problems, officials expected 1.30 crore tonnes of yield this year, up from 1.22 crore tonnes last year.

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Dravid's double ton

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final Test.

Imran Farhat was caught in the slips off Laxmiapthy Balaji for three, while Taufeeq Umer was given out leg-before to Irfan Pathan after making 13.

Yasir Hameed was unbeaten on eight and nightwatchman Kamran Akmal was on 10 as the hosts faced an uphill task to prevent India from winning their first overseas series since Sri Lanka in 1993 and their maiden one on Pakistan soil.

The arch rivals are locked 1-1 in the three-match rubber, the first between the two countries in Pakistan since 1989.

Dravid, who came to bat on Tuesday evening after opener Virender Sehwag was dismissed off the first ball of the innings, ground the Pakistani attack into the dust for two consecutive days.

He had batted through Wednesday to remain unconquered on 134 and continued in the same vein till an hour before stumps on Thursday to put India in control of the make-or-break Test.

Dravid held vigil for 12 hours and 20 minutes under the hot sun, hitting 34 boundaries and a six, before he was ninth out, bowled by part-timer Imran Farhat attempting an uncharacteristic

reverse sweep.

It was the 31-year-old's third major knock in nine Tests this season following his 222 against New Zealand at Ahmedabad in October and 233 against Australia at Adelaide in December.

4 JCD leaders freed after their 'arrest'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Motijheel police yesterday allegedly released four Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders of Habibullah Bahar College, two and half hours after they were held on charge of kidnapping and beating a bus driver.

According to sources, led by Al Masum, organising secretary of the college unit JCD, a group of ruling BNP's student wing activists

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