

# Another rally, another day of pain for city dwellers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Traffic in the capital came to a grinding halt again due to a public event yesterday causing people, especially patients, to suffer.

People celebrated Unesco's recognition of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic March 7 Speech through processions and a rally at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

The cabinet division on Tuesday asked all government employees to take part in the procession from Dhanmondi Bangabandhu Memorial Museum to Suhrawardy Udyan via Mirpur Road, Elephant Road and Dhaka University campus.

The procession caused nearby streets to become clogged.

Outdoor patients at the country's largest hospital -- Dhaka Medical College Hospital -- suffered due to an hour-long service disruption from 11:40am. Many doctors had left the hospital to join the rally.

Several hundred patients were seen leaving without getting treatment during the peak service hours at the hospital.

There was a horrendous jam at the entry to the hospital's emergency department.

"My sister, who is bleeding, was stuck in the gridlock for nearly two hours as the roads leading to the hospital were jammed," said Arif Hossain, who rushed his sister Sathi Akhtar from Khanpur of Narayanganj.

Sonia Akhtar, who came from Savar, said, "I came a long way for medical care but could not find a doctor."

After three hours, she somehow managed to see a doctor at the emergency section.

The spill over affected adjoining areas at least until 6:00pm.

Police made the streets around Suhrawardy Udyan off limits to vehicles since noon and asked the city dwellers to avoid the procession route from Bangabandhu Memorial Museum to the venue.

Doctors and staffers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), another important public healthcare institution, left the outdoor department to attend the rally as part of the nationwide celebrations of Unesco's recognition of the March 7 Speech.

Many patients failed to see doctors there.

Abdur Rob Munshi, an elderly person from Madaripur, had gone to the hospital but could not see a doctor even after waiting for an hour and a half.

Atikur Rahman from Bikrampur went to the hospital with his parent but could not show his father's medical report to the doctor who had seen him before. The doctor was in Suhrawardy Udyan.

After waiting for two hours, he showed the report to another doctor.

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**Top, A tense family with an ailing elderly person stuck in the traffic jam stemming from the rally. They remained stuck near the Shishu Academy in the capital for over an hour. Bottom left, Roads on and below the Moghbazar-Malibagh flyover remain gridlocked. Middle, Passengers clamoured to get on the few buses that were available. Bottom right, The colourful rally passing through the Dhanmondi area.**

PHOTO: STAR

## Anti-liberation forces mustn't come to power

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of March 7 Speech as a world documentary heritage on October 30.

In his historic speech on March 7, 1971, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had called on the freedom-loving Bangalees to wage a decisive struggle against the Pakistani rulers.

Yesterday's programmes, which included jubilant processions, essay and quiz competitions and screening of films on the war, were organised by the government in districts and upazilas across the country.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Cabinet Division asked all public servants to join the processions. Students and teachers of different schools and colleges in Dhaka also participated in the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.

The daylong celebrations in the capital began around noon as a group of government employees, led by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, placed wreaths at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman at his residence on Dhanmondi Road 32.

Holding banners, festoons and placards and chanting "Joy Bangla" and "Joy Bangabandhu" slogans, public servants, students and people from other professions started to throng Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday morning.

The historic speech played over loudspeakers from processions reverberated many areas of the city.

In her address, Hasina, daughter of Bangabandhu, recalled her memories of the speech and said it had a clear directive to the people to liberate the country.

"It was not merely a speech. It's the history of a nation as he [Bangabandhu] depicted 24 years of Pakistani oppression and called for building resistance against Pakistani rule [through it].

"In his address, Bangabandhu called for economic emancipation of the country. We will free Bangladesh of poverty and hunger as dreamt by the Father of the Nation. We will make

Bangladesh a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed one by 2041 and this is the pledge from this civic rally.

"Standing here, I remember the historic day in 1971. I had the fortune of being here [Suhrawardy Udyan] which was previously known as Race Course Maidan] on that day," Hasina said and shared memories of her father and also her mother Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib.

After the assassination of Bangabandhu, the premier said, the speech was "banned" in the country.

"This speech never went on air through radio and television. Our leaders and activists had to face inhuman torture for playing this speech, many leaders and workers gave away their lives."

Hasina said no one can erase history as real history always remains and this has been proven.

She also wanted to know the present condition of those who had "banned" the historic speech. "Where will they hide their faces after its recog-

nition by Unesco?"

The PM said it is a matter of great regret for all that the anti-liberation forces not only killed the Father of the Nation, but also destroyed the ideal on which the Liberation War was waged and martyrs laid down their lives.

"They put Razakars, Al-Badrs and killers in state power... they distorted the country's history. They didn't allow me to return to the country," she said.

"Once upon a time, Bangladesh was known as an extreme poverty-stricken nation. But now the country has created its position amid the global community as a dignified nation. Bangladesh is now a role model of development. When Awami League assumed the state power after 21 years, we worked with the ideology of the Father of the Nation," she said.

Earlier, Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Shafiqul Alam gave the welcome address while Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury also spoke at the rally that began with the national anthem.

# BDR MUTINY HC verdict on appeals today

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court is set to deliver its verdict today on the death reference and appeals of 152 convicts filed against their convictions in the Pilkhana BDR mutiny case.

The death reference and appeals have been kept as item No-1 of High Court's cause list for today.

A two-member HC bench, comprising Justice Md Abu Zafor Siddique and Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder, will pronounce the judgment.

On April 3, a three-member special HC bench, led by Justice Shawkat Hossain, kept the verdict as Curia Advisari Vult (CAV) after concluding the hearing on the appeals and the death reference.

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## Schoolboy

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matter that evening, the OC added.

When Fazlul was on way to attend a religious gathering at adjacent Kandapara village, his friends again locked in an altercation with him. At one stage, one of the friends allegedly stabbed him with a knife in his back, leaving him critically injured in Kandapara Govt Primary School area around 10:00pm, the OC informed.

Hearing his scream, locals rushed to the spot and took him to Muktachha Upazila Health Complex where he died. His body was sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Locals brought out a procession in the area yesterday morning in protest against the killing. The protesters demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

## Country's interest protected

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The ministry distributed copies of the "Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State", signed between the two countries in Naypyitaw on Thursday, among journalists.

Responding to questions from reporters, Mahmood said the criticism about not mentioning a specific timeframe in the agreement for completion of the repatriation was not right, because it can't be done within a given timeframe. "Both the countries have agreed to start the repatriation process in two months and it will be completed within a reasonable time."

Asked whether "a reasonable time" is a vague term, the minister said it's obviously a vague term. "There is no benefit in mentioning a specific timeframe as well."

He, however, admitted that the deal was signed following the general guiding principles of the 1992 agreement. "Myanmar wanted to sign the repatriation arrangement based on the 1992 deal and it was done accordingly."

Earlier on October 9, the minister at a diplomatic briefing in the capital said Dhaka did not agree with the Naypyitaw's proposal for following the principle and criteria of the 1992 deal to take back the Myanmar nationals. The 1992 criteria is "not realistic" and the current situation was "entirely different" from that of 1992, he added.

Around half of the Muslim villages in Myanmar's Rakhine State have been burned down since August 25. "So, the identification of Rohingyas based on their residence in Rakhine will not be realistic. Bangladesh, therefore, proposed and handed over a new arrangement to the visiting [Myanmar] minister outlining the

KEY FEATURES OF THE DEAL
The process of return shall commence within two months
Returnees must be residents of Myanmar
No restriction on the number of the people to be repatriated
Assistance of UNHCR will be sought
Myanmar will implement recommendations of the Annan commission
A Joint Working Group will be established to oversee the repatriation

principles and criteria for repatriation," he told foreign diplomats.

Under a joint statement signed on April 28, 1992, Myanmar had agreed to take back only those Rohingyas who could "establish their bona fide residency in Myanmar" prior to their departure for Bangladesh.

Following the latest bilateral discussion held in Naypyitaw on Wednesday, the two countries reached an understanding on considering all relevant documents, facts and requirements for sustainable return of the displaced Myanmar nationals.

"For verification, Myanmar will provide the necessary forms to be filled by the prospective returnees. Forms used in the post-1992 repatriation would generally be used as reference," the latest deal reads.

Mahmood said Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to duly associate the UNHCR with the repatriation process and take assistance from it.

Under the agreement, Myanmar will take back those people, who entered Bangladesh after October 9 last year and August 25 this year, he added.

Repatriation of those who took shelter in Bangladesh before October 9 last year would also be considered separately after conclusion of the present arrangement, the minister told journalists.

"The signing of the arrangement is an initial step.... There are more steps. Both sides have agreed to take assistance from the UNHCR in the Rohingya repatriation process. Myanmar will take assistance as per its requirement."

He said the Myanmar government agreed to take assistance from China and India over setting up prefabricated houses for the returnees. The makeshift houses will be essential as they will initially be kept at temporary shelter houses before being rehabilitated to their place of origin or nearby places as per their choice.

"Most of the houses have been torched.... Where will they stay after returning there?... I talked with India and China before and after my visit to Myanmar, and requested the two governments to supply prefabricated houses for the returnees. Both the countries agreed to extend their cooperation in this regard," said the foreign minister.

Mahmood said when he informed the Myanmar authorities about his talks with India and China on makeshift houses, Myanmar Union Minister Kyaw Tint Swe said his country would talk with the two countries in this regard.

According to the foreign minister, Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed that a Joint Working Group will be set up within three weeks of the signing of the arrangement to oversee the repatriation. The terms of reference of the working group will be agreed upon by both the sides.

A specific instrument on the physi-

cal arrangement for the repatriation process would be drawn up upon reaching an agreement in a speedy manner. Both the countries may agree on further instrument(s), as needed, for successful completion of repatriation, the minister added.

As per the instrument, Myanmar has agreed to take necessary measures to halt the outflow of its residents to Bangladesh, to restore normalcy in Northern Rakhine and to encourage those who had left Myanmar to return voluntarily and safely to their own households and original places of residence or to a safe and secure place nearest to it of their choice.

The deal says Bangladesh will provide whatever data it can obtain on the displaced people who left Myanmar after October 9, 2016, and August 25, 2017, attacks. Subsequently, the two sides will quickly engage to find out details of their residency in Myanmar, prior to their taking shelter in Bangladesh.

Based on the list of returnees or information provided by Bangladesh, the Myanmar government will accept all people along with their family members after verification, reads the agreement.

After completion of return, the two governments shall cooperate for the prevention of the illegal crossing of the borders by persons from either side. Both the governments shall refrain from granting residency or citizenship to such illegal migrants, it added.

The foreign minister said during his tour to Myanmar, the two countries also signed a protocol, finalised in 2007, on redrawing the permanent boundary of the Naf river and exchanged an "instrument of ratification" on the agreement, signed in 1998, on the demarcation of land to the north of the Naf river.

# Graft to halve if politicians stay away from it

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said politicians are responsible for corruption and asked them to take lesson from Bangabandhu.

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman set a rare example of honesty and courage in politics, Quader, also the roads, transport and bridges minister, said while addressing a seminar at Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) auditorium in the capital.

AL Information and Research Subcommittee organised the seminar, titled "March 7: Alokter Jhormadhara" marking the Unesco's recognition of the historic March 7 Speech as a world documentary heritage.

"We, who are in politics, can take lesson from Bangabandhu. How many of the politicians can claim themselves to be honest? Where is the problem?" Quader said.

"Corruption will be halved if we the politicians can keep ourselves free from corruption," he said.

## Upper hand

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against humanity.

International relations analysts think Myanmar struck the repatriation deal with Bangladesh under global pressure.

They expressed doubt whether Myanmar is sincere about the Rohingya repatriation, especially because it failed to restore law and order in Rakhine where communal violence still continues.

According to the deal, the Rohingyas can also be verified based on other documents issued by the Myanmar authorities or information indicating their residence in Myanmar, such as address, reference to household or business document, school attendance or any other relevant particulars.

Prof CR Abrar, an expert on refugee and migration affairs, said it is absurd that the Myanmar authorities are asking for papers or documents from those who fled atrocities to save their lives.

"Their houses were burned down. Their assets were either destroyed or looted. How can they present any documents?" he asked.

Abrar, a teacher of international relations at Dhaka University, said the other option -- information indicating their residence or schools -- is a more acceptable way of verification.

He also referred to another provision in the deal, which says "recipient of refugee documents issued by the UNHCR will undergo the same verification process".

This means the UN agency's registration of a Rohingya would be ignored, Abrar pointed out.

The deal also says that in cases of dispute over eligibility for return to Myanmar, Dhaka and Naypyitaw will sit with all documents and information to resolve such cases. And Myanmar will make the final decision regarding verification.

Pointing to Myanmar's upper hand in determining eligibility, Abrar said, "It is Myanmar's armed forces and security agencies that forced the Rohingyas to flee. It is ridiculous that they would be the determiner of repatriation eligibility."

Abrar further said Naypyitaw is basically following the 1982 citizenship law of Myanmar and the 1992 agreement on repatriation of the Rohingyas.

"If this is so, I don't see any sustainable solution to the decades-long problem," he said.

Talking to this newspaper, a number of Rohingyas, who have residency cards, expressed unwillingness to go back to Rakhine under the prevailing situation.

Mohammad Ilias, 33, who was a school teacher in Maungdaw of Rakhine, said he has a residency card, but he does not want to return to Myanmar unless he gets back his house and other properties.

"I would like to go back home, but where would I live with my family... in a camp?" he questioned.

The repatriation deal mentions Myanmar's commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, which suggested that the Rohingyas be granted citizenship and provided with equal opportunities in all spheres of life.

But in a statement on November 15, Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said the Rohingyas cannot return to Rakhine until "real Myanmar citizens" are ready to accept them.

"Emphasis must be placed on the wish of local Rakhine ethnic people who are real Myanmar citizens," he said.

Aung Hlaing also refuted all allegations of abuse, insisting troops only targeted Rohingya insurgents.

He has all along stated that the Rohingyas are Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, going in line with the hardliner Buddhists of Myanmar.