

HISTORIC SPACEX FLIGHT

AFP, Kennedy Space Center

A SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying two NASA astronauts docked with the International Space Station.

"Soft capture," the moment when the spacecraft makes first contact and latching with the target vehicle, occurred at 14:22 GMT.

Two veteran NASA astronauts were headed for the International Space Station (ISS) on Saturday after Elon Musk's SpaceX became the first commercial company to launch a rocket carrying humans into orbit, ushering in a new era in space travel.

SpaceX's two-stage Falcon 9 rocket with astronauts Robert Behnken and Douglas Hurley aboard blasted off flawlessly in a cloud of bright orange flames and smoke from Florida's Kennedy Space Center for a 19-hour voyage to the space station.

"Let's light this candle," Hurley, the mission commander, told SpaceX

mission control in Hawthorne, California, before liftoff at 3:22 pm (1922 GMT) from NASA's storied Launch Pad 39A.

The SpaceX launch is the first of American astronauts from US soil since the space shuttle program ended in 2011 and the first crewed flight ever by a private company.

"I'm really quite overcome with emotion," Musk said. "It's been 18 years working towards this goal."

"This is hopefully the first step on a journey towards civilization on Mars," the SpaceX founder said.

NASA's space agency congratulated the SpaceX company over its successful launch of the manned rocket.

NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine said it was a "great day" for NASA and SpaceX and an "important milestone for the nation."

"We're not celebrating yet," Bridenstine cautioned. "We will celebrate when they're home safely."

In a brief interview from space, Hurley said that in keeping with the tradition of having astronauts name their spacecraft, he and Behnken had named the Crew Dragon capsule "Endeavour" after the retired space shuttle on which they both flew.

Behnken said the SpaceX capsule is a "lot different than its namesake" in that "it has touch display screens."

The mission, dubbed "Demo-2," ends a government monopoly on space flight and is the final test flight before NASA certifies SpaceX's capsule for regular crewed missions.

Behnken, 49, and Hurley, 53, former military test pilots who joined NASA in 2000, were scheduled to dock with the space station at 10:29 am yesterday.

They will join US astronaut Chris Cassidy and Russian cosmonauts Anatoly Ivanishin and Ivan Vagner aboard the ISS.

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Shikhhak Parishad General Secretary Shahjahan Alam Shaju alleged that teachers and staff, working at schools under MPO but not covered by the MPO scheme yet, were not getting listed.

Meanwhile, Nekbor Hossain, convenor of teachers' forum, said officials were not listing non-MPO teachers working at honours and masters colleges.

Mominur said that they will sort out the issues.

"Non-MPO teachers and staff working at educational institutions that have the Educational Institute Identification Number issued by the government will be listed."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina so far announced a total of 18 stimulus packages worth around Tk 1,01,117 crore, which is around 3.5 percent of the country's GDP, to offset the shock of COVID-19 pandemic on various sectors of the country.

Govt mulls incentive

FROM PAGE 12

According to Bangladesh Teachers Association President Nazrul Islam Rony, more than two lakh non-MPO teachers of secondary school and colleges are facing hardship as their educational institutions are closed due to coronavirus outbreak.

"In the absence of salaries, the teachers are living an inhuman life," Rony said, adding if the educational institutions remain closed for long, the situation of teachers will be catastrophic.

Authorities of non-government educational institutions argue that they could not pay the salaries of their employees as the tuition fees from students, their only source of earnings, could not be collected.

According to Rony, only a few renowned schools in the capital could pay the salaries of their employees from the school savings, without being dependent on tuition fees.

Non-MPO teachers said they are usually ill-paid and provide private tuition to enhance their earnings. Now with schools closed and children mostly staying home, they lost both the means of earning.

Although the pandemic-induced general holiday ends today, all

educational institutions will remain closed until June 15.

However, on April 27, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said all educational institutions may stay closed until September if the coronavirus situation does not improve.

THE LIST

The government on May 23 started listing non-MPO teachers. They are collecting mobile phone numbers and NID numbers of all non-MPO teachers and staff through field-level education officials, supervised by the local administration officers.

Education ministry officials said they sent a letter to all deputy commissioners in this regard on May 23.

Many teachers believe that the government is collecting information to provide financial assistance during the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

However, Mominur Rashid Amin, additional secretary of secondary and higher education division, said this list has nothing to do with incentives.

The existing list is being updated, he added.

"The decision about incentives will come from the government high-ups," said Mominur, who is overseeing the

listing process.

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Magnanimity is not our weakness

FROM PAGE 12

in opinion between him and Manik Miah but they always resolved those through discussions and Manik Miah showed unstinted support to the programmes of the Awami League through his newspaper.

Bangabandhu says Manik Miah was killed by the same elements who had killed Suhrawardy. "They also invited me to Rawalpindi with the same motive and if I went there I would have to face the same fate," shares the prime minister.

BANGABANDHU'S STERN WARNING TO EXPLORERS

Bangabandhu today warns hoarders, smugglers and conspirators of stern action if they don't desist from their evil-mongering immediately.

"We are showing magnanimity by giving them a chance to abandon illegal activities but they must keep it in mind that this is not a sign of our weakness," says the prime minister. He further says that Bangalees have fought against the hoarders of Yahya Khan and they know how to punish the evil elements. Bangladesh has achieved its independence through the blood and tears of millions of countrymen

and the government will not allow any criminal elements to foil their sacrifice.

UN CHIEF'S EMERGENCY CALL FOR FOOD AID FOR BANGLADESH

UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim today calls upon the developed countries to provide additional 10 lakh tonnes of food aid to Bangladesh on an emergency basis. Recently, Bangladesh government made a request to the UN chief about this food aid requirement.

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