

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



3,554
New cases in 24hrs



5,77,241
Total cases



8,738
Deaths



5,25,994
Recoveries



2,740,669
Deaths



124,627,658
Total cases

March 7 speech defends universal values

Says Unesco DG; German president congratulates nation

AGENCIES, DHAKA

Unesco Director General Audrey Azoulay yesterday said the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman defended universal values, freedom, human rights and dignity.

She said this in a video message played on the seventh day of a 10-day special programme marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu and the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, reports BSS.

The Unesco DG said 50 years ago on March 7, Bangabandhu had delivered his historic and momentous speech that marked the history of Bangladesh and the world, momentous because this day led to the country's independence.

"These are precisely the reasons why Unesco inscribed this historic speech in its memory of the world register. It's also why our organisation is delighted to join in the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of birth of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," she said.

Azoulay said for five years now, Dhaka has been home to Unesco's international mother language institute and thanks to Bangladesh that international community celebrate now International Mother Language Day every year on February 21.

"We will further strengthen this commitment to culture by creating the Unesco-Bangladesh Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman international prize for creative economy," she added.

GERMAN PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO HAMID

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier has said Bangladesh has undergone an "impressive development and is today a vibrant democracy" with high economic growth rates.

"At the same time, Bangladesh has succeeded in clearly reducing poverty in the country using innovative development policy strategies," he said in a message sent to President Abdul Hamid yesterday.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen read out the message at a programme held at the capital's National Parade Square yesterday, marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu and the golden jubilee of independence, reports UNB.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, the German president congratulated his Bangladesh counterpart and the people of Bangladesh. "I wish you strength and every success for the tasks that lie ahead."

Myanmar junta 'sad' at protest deaths

Vows to stamp out 'anarchy'

AGENCIES

Myanmar's military yesterday said it was sad about people killed in its brutal crackdown on anti-coup protests, but vowed to press ahead with stamping out what it called "anarchy".

The junta has unleashed deadly violence as it struggles to quell nationwide protests against the February 1 ousting of civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a news conference in the capital Naypyidaw, junta spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun put the death toll lower at 164.

"I am sad because these violent terrorist people who died are our nationals," he said.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) activist group said at least 261 people have been killed in the brutal crackdown by security forces.

The streets of towns and cities across the country have seen chaotic scenes for weeks as security forces clash with protesters demanding the restoration of democracy and the release of Suu Kyi.

The authorities have used tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to disperse protesters, prompting a senior UN rights expert to warn they may be committing "crimes against humanity".

But despite widespread international condemnation, Zaw Min Tun defended the response, saying that the security forces were dealing with "insurgents holding weapons" and five police and four soldiers had been killed.

"We have to crack down on the anarchy. Which countries in the world accept anarchy?" he said.

Despite the bloodshed, protesters took to the streets again yesterday, staging dawn demonstrations in parts of the commercial capital Yangon.

A seven-year-old girl killed in shooting in Mandalay city, a funeral service said.

As well as breaking up protests, the military has sought to stem the flow of news about the crackdown, banning several local media outlets and arresting dozens of journalists.

Mobile data networks are suspended and Zaw Min Tun said there were presently no plans to restore them.

Suu Kyi, not seen in public since being detained on February 1, is facing several criminal charges as well as allegations of accepting illegal payments of gold and cash.

Sean Turnell, an Australian adviser to the 75-year-old Nobel laureate, is being investigated under immigration and state secrets laws, the junta spokesman announced yesterday.

Turnell, an economist and university professor, was the first foreign national arrested following the coup, reports AFP.

The Australian embassy yesterday warned its citizens to prepare to "shelter in place" with essential supplies, while Myanmar's former colonial ruler Britain has already advised its nationals to get out.

Neighbouring Thailand is bracing for a possible influx of tens of thousands of refugees if the situation worsens.

Meanwhile, the Arakan Army (AA), a major ethnic militia in Myanmar's restive Rakhine state, yesterday joined other ethnic groups in condemning last month's military coup and the ensuing violent crackdown on protesters.

While several other armed groups fighting long-running wars in Myanmar's borderlands have signalled their support for pro-democracy protests, the AA, which had agreed a ceasefire with the government ousted on February 1, had not commented publicly, reports Reuters.

"It is a great sadness that innocent people are being shot and killed all over Myanmar," AA spokesman Khine Thu Kha said in a message, adding that the group was "together ... with the people".

"The current actions by the Burmese army and police are very cruel and unacceptable," he said.

He said the AA would "continue to go forward for the oppressed Rakhine people" and that "the oppressed ethnic people as a whole will continue to fight for their freedom from oppression".

On Sunday, civil society groups based in Rakhine demanded the junta "abandon the coup and accept the federal democratic system, based on self-administration, that is desired by the people".

Gone with the blaze

FROM PAGE 1

reeling from the loss of their homes and belongings.

Talking to The Daily Star, Sukkur Maji (supervisor) of FWC block of Balukhali Camp, said panic gripped the refugees in the block as the fire spread quickly.

Referring to statements of a number of refugees in the camp, he said the fire originated from camp-18, about half a kilometre from the FWC block. Fed by gas cylinders, it started spreading fast, he added.

"The fire turned devastating due to a lack of water," he mentioned.

Shah Rejwan Hayat, commissioner of the Relief, Rehabilitation and Repatriation Commission, said they recovered 11 bodies, including three of minors.

The UNHCR, however, in a statement said primary reports show that as of yesterday morning, 15 refugees lost their lives in the blaze.

At least 560 people were injured and an estimated 400 people are still missing, said the statement published on the UNHCR's official website.

It also said around 10,000 shelters are estimated to have been destroyed or damaged. Besides, about 45,000 Rohingya refugees lost their shelters and belongings in the devastating blaze.

Meanwhile, Disaster Management

and Relief Secretary Md Mohsin said, "We have not yet received information about any refugee going missing. It is being checked whether anyone has gone missing."

He was speaking at a briefing at the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission's office in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

GAS CYLINDERS

Md Younus, a refugee living in C-block of Balukhali Camp, told this newspaper that authorities had distributed gas cylinders among the refugees for household use on Monday afternoon, several hours before the fire broke out.

Asked, Shah Rejwan Hayat said, "We saw some gas cylinders go off after the fire broke out. It certainly made the blaze go out of control."

It would require a thorough investigation to ascertain how and from where the fire originated, he noted.

The blaze damaged around 10,000 structures, including homes, hospitals and learning facilities. Besides, around 45,000 people were affected by the fire, he said.

"Those who suffered minor injuries were given primary treatment at various facilities."

He said they have formed a high-powered probe committee to find out the cause of the fire.



Bhutanese Prime Minister Lotay Tshering stands in silence after placing a wreath at the National Memorial in Savar to pay tribute to the Liberation War martyrs. He arrived in Dhaka yesterday on a three-day visit to attend the celebrations of the Mujib Borsho and the golden jubilee of independence.

PHOTO: PID

Now it's Bhutan

FROM PAGE 1

Bhandari left for Nepal yesterday after a two-day visit, during which she held talks with President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. Four MoUs were also signed between the two countries during her visit.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will arrive in Dhaka on March 26 on a two-day visit.

After a call on the Bhutanese prime minister yesterday afternoon, Foreign Minister Momen said Bhutan, which recognised Bangladesh on December 6 in 1971, is a genuine friend of Bangladesh.

"We have discussed connectivity. The prime minister [Tshering] says development is possible if the potential of the region is best utilised. It can be done through connectivity and partnership. Then, we don't need to look at others. We don't need the advice of others," Momen said.

Asked about connectivity, he said,

"We are considering a direct flight from Dhaka to Thimphu. We will also examine railway connectivity. We can also consider options of river routes."

Tshering, who studied medicine in Bangladesh and can speak fluent Bangla, arrived at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 9:30am yesterday. Hasina welcomed him at the VVIP tarmac with a bouquet. The visiting leader was subsequently given a tri-services guard of honour.

Several ministers, state ministers, and high-ranking civil and military officials were also present at the airport. Tshering then went to the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar to pay tributes to the martyrs of the Liberation War of Bangladesh. He signed the visitors' book and planted a sapling next to the one he planted on April 12, 2019.

He also visited the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi to pay tribute to the Father of the Nation.

"On behalf of the people and the Royal Government of Bhutan, I offer

my humble respect and prayers to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for rising above the manacles of foreign exploitation and blessing the nation onto a path of unprecedented peace, prosperity and stability," the Bhutanese premier wrote in the visitors' book, reports BSS.

His daughter Sheikh Hasina is now fulfilling Bangabandhu's vision of 'Sonar Bangla', and with each passing year, Bangladesh is becoming more prosperous and its people are becoming happier, he also wrote.

"... thank you [Bangabandhu] for being a true leader. Amar Desh, Tomar Desh... B/desh, B/desh [my country, your country... Bangladesh, Bangladesh]," Tshering wrote.

In the evening, Tshering attended a cultural programme and a banquet hosted by Hasina in his honour.

He is scheduled to pay a courtesy call on Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban in the afternoon today.

Plagiarism found in work of two DU teachers

FROM PAGE 1

For this, they withdrew half of the Tk 3.50 lakh amount in advance.

In February last year, when the researchers applied for the remaining 50 percent of the fund, after submitting the research paper along with reviewers' comments, ASB declined.

In a letter to the researchers on November 23 last year, ASB termed the research report "a mess in terms of quality", saying it was "filled with innumerable errors that display extreme level of carelessness and lack of professionalism".

The research and seminar committee of ASB found 210 spelling mistakes and typos in the report, along with many incomplete sentences. Even the name of one of the researchers was misspelt, it said.

In light of the findings of the committee, ASB council - the supreme authority of the organisation - on November 14 last year cancelled the research grant.

The review committee also recommended issuing a letter to the Dhaka University vice-chancellor and forming a committee to delve deep into the matter to ensure ethical standards in ASB's research and breaches of contract between ASB and the two researchers, said a source at ASB.

In its letter, ASB, a non-profit research organisation, said the authors didn't properly follow the terms and conditions spelt out in the appointment letter.

"The report neither complies with the objectives of the study nor is it based on scientific methodology. The report has been found heavily plagiarised, which is highly immoral and a gross violation of rules that call for further measures," it stated.

In January this year, three DU professors -- Samia Rahman, Syed Mahfuzul Haque Marjan, and Muhammad Omor Faruq -- were demoted on charges of plagiarism in their published research papers.

Later, earlier this month, Samia Rahman said she will take legal recourse and that she is a victim of "colleagues' conspiracy".

WHAT HAPPENED

Dr Eshani and Dr Zobiaida submitted the final report of the research on February 19 last year.

Under the standard academic review process, the research and seminar committee of the organisation then sent the paper to the first reviewer and then to the second reviewer.

Following the feedback of the two reviewers, the committee in a meeting on October 29 last year said, "The committee considered that both of them [the authors] have tarnished the image of ASB. Both researchers have shown extreme proportion of carelessness in submission of the report."

The meeting minutes stated: "They [the researchers] did not even address the reviewers' comments properly. One of them has even called the reviewers' competence into question."

This researcher was Prof Eshani, who was present at the meeting as an elected member of the ASB council for 2020-21 and also a member of the research and seminar committee, said organisation insiders. Prof Zobiaida is not a member of ASB.

Prof Eshani sent a letter on December 5, three days after the researchers returned their advance of the research grant, to ASB President Mahfuz

Khanam.

In the letter, she complained that in the last two research and seminar committee's Zoom meetings, she was removed on both occasions on the "pretext" of discussing an agenda that involved her and Zobiaida.

She also said the committee meetings are usually dominated by one person, without naming anyone, who decides and dictates everything for everyone.

"The most serious and grievous experience in the meetings was that I was personally attacked and faced verbally offensive words," she wrote in the letter.

She added that though they have returned the money and withdrawn the report, "a deliberate attempt is being made to politicise the issue and create a hostile situation."

THE PLAGIARISED RESEARCH PAPER

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the submitted paper with the comments and remarks of the research and seminar committee.

On reviewing the document, this correspondent found at least 523 spelling mistakes and typos. The authors used at least three different types of Bangla fonts, leading to frequent typos.

In the entire 68-page paper, only two pages -- page 48 and 56 -- had no plagiarism or spelling mistakes and typos marked up by the review committee.

However, both pages had oral history accounts with no justification given for the choice of interviewees, which had already been remarked on by the reviewers, the committee said.

Though the two DU researchers mentioned in the paper that they had taken interviews of local researchers and cultural workers, there was no proof as it had no list of respondents or the questionnaire attached, stated the committee.

The reviewers marked "plagiarised" 48 times in the research paper, which had 168 paragraphs in total.

The research and seminar committee also noted that the authors listed 10 references at the end of the paper -- only three of which were books while the rest of the citations were Banglapedia, a publication brought out by ASB, various blog posts, and newspaper articles.

The committee also remarked that the methodology of the paper was weak, referencing style was incorrect, and the conclusion was poor.

The research paper's conclusion was 16 lines long, in which there were 13 spelling mistakes and three typos.

The research paper used multiple fonts on pages 21 through 27, and most of these pages were full of spelling mistakes and typos. This correspondent found page 21 to contain 36 such mistakes in 30 lines.

Another remark by the reviewers was that the authors used 38 web sources; these were mainly informally cited in the URL form in the footnotes.

RESEARCHERS' DEFENCE

Contacted, Zobiaida Nasreen said, "It was an inadvertent mistake by me. I personally apologised for the matter, withdrew the paper, and returned the money to the organisation [ASB]."

She said a couple of years ago, while she was abroad, she and her fellow author had mistakenly submitted a paper which was written by their research assistants.

"It was an ethical problem and I

admit it. However, after submitting the paper, I had told Harun sir that it was not the final copy, I submitted it by mistake. I apologised to him."

Prof Harun-or-Rashid, vice chancellor of National University, is an ASB council member.

Zobiaida added, "The paper is withdrawn and not published. I am not defending it but before publication we get a chance to remove mistakes. I am sorry as an academic about what I have done."

"Our contract has been cancelled. What else do they [ASB] want now? I am not even a member of ASB."

She, however, alleged that it has now become a "political issue with Prof Harun and Prof Eshani Chakraborty." "I became a victim here."

Prof Eshani claimed the accusation of plagiarism itself is politically motivated and baseless.

"As it was not a published document, anybody can claim this is plagiarism," she told this paper recently.

"This has now become a fashion, a new dimension of leg-pulling of a teacher by another. If you talk about such kind of plagiarism, 90 percent of research in addition with MPhil and PhD research in Bangladesh will be cancelled."

"Besides, there is no Bangla software to detect plagiarism."

"The politics is that I won the election of the ASB council from an opposing panel over others."

She referred this correspondent to the general secretary of ASB since she has no authority to speak about any decision of the council.

Contacted, both ASB General Secretary Prof Sabbir Ahmed and ASB President Mahfuz Khanam declined to comment on the matter, saying it was an internal issue.

ASB Council Member Prof Harun-or-Rashid said since its establishment, the ASB has not discriminated over the academics' political leanings or panels.

"No one will accept submission of such a paper, which has 60 to 70 percent content copied from other sources, in this organisation. This is a deviation from the principles of this organisation. What they have done is an unforgivable offence."

Yet, the authors could have been exonerated if they had admitted that it was a mistake, Prof Harun said.

"Instead of doing so, they are trying to divert the issue to another direction by making different statements at different times. At times, they're saying it is a draft copy, sometimes adding the gender dimension here, and sometimes giving the excuse of being from the opposition," he added.

"Doesn't a teacher have the courage to admit a mistake and seek apology for that?"

DU Pro-VC (academic) Prof ASM Maksud Kamal, too, said the case is one of plagiarism. There are two types of plagiarism -- one is pre-published and another after publication, he said.

"If any organisation or publishing authority finds plagiarism in any article, they don't publish it."

DU does not yet have a research guideline -- however, Prof Maksud said a draft is ready and waiting to be reviewed by the DU syndicate.

In any case, he said, there is no clear university rules regarding punishment for researchers' plagiarism in the case of published or unpublished work like this one.

MAYHEM IN SUNAMGANJ

No case, yet Jhumon in jail for 7 days

30 accused of attack on Hindus on remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Niva Rani Das, mother of Jhumon Das Apon, yesterday demanded release of her son.

Police detained Jhumon on March 16 over an alleged Facebook post criticising a statement of Hefajat-e Islam leader Mamunul Haque.

The next day, a mob of several hundred Hefajat supporters attacked, vandalised and looted 90 Hindu houses in Noagaon village of Sunamganj's Shalla.

"For seven days, I have not been able to know his location and to see him," Niva said at a press conference at the Crime Reporters' Association of Bangladesh's office in the capital.

At the press conference, organised by Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajot, she said, "Her son was handed over to the police on Tuesday [March 16] night. Next morning, I went to Shalla Police Station to see him but failed. That morning, they [Hefajat supporters] attacked our village, looted everything from my house and broke a hand of my daughter-in-law [Jhumon's wife]."

Demanding release of her son, the mother said, "There is no case against him."

Jhumon was sent to jail after being produced before a Sunamganj court under section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

In another development, a Sunamganj court yesterday granted remand for 30 accused of two cases filed in connection with the attack, vandalism and looting valuables from Hindu houses.

Senior Chief Judicial Magistrate Shyam Kanta Sinha granted a five-day remand for prime accused Shahidul Islam Swadhin and a two-day remand for 29 other accused, said Salim Nawaj, court inspector of Sunamganj police.

Earlier, the investigation officer of the cases prayed for a 10-day remand for Shahidul and a five-day remand for others.

So far, 34 accused of the cases have been arrested.

Meanwhile, Gonoshasthya Kendra Founder and Trustee Dr Zafurullah Chowdhury visited the village yesterday.

During the visit, Dr Zafurullah said the attack was planned and demanded a judicial probe into the mayhem.

He also claimed that Awami League men with Hefajat supporters carried out the attack.

"It's a shame that the village was attacked on the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. We never fought for these days and this independence," he said, demanding the probe report in seven days.

Facebook hit by French lawsuit over hate speech

AFP, Paris

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders announced Tuesday that it has filed a lawsuit against Facebook in France, saying the website breaks its own terms by failing to protect users against hate speech.

The Paris-based campaign group, known by its French acronym RSE, said it was taking Facebook to court for "misleading commercial practices".

The US social media giant has allowed the "massive proliferation" of hate speech and false information on its site, RSE said.

The watchdog argues that while Facebook pledges in its terms of service to provide "a safe, secure and error-free environment" for users, it fails to do this as hateful content and misinformation are widespread on the site.

The legal complaint, seen by AFP, targets subsidiaries Facebook France and Facebook Ireland, through which the company conducts some of its French activities.

27 injured

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TSC area, hundreds of Chhatra League activists attacked them.

Chhatra Front DU unit President Salman Siddique said, "Chhatra League attacked our peaceful procession. At least 20-25 of our brothers have been injured and 15 of them are admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital."

In another incident in the morning, several BCL activists snatched an effigy of Modi, which was kept there to be burned by Bangladesh Students Federation at Raju Memorial Sculpture on the DU campus.

Later, Federation activists burnt several photos of Modi protesting his visit to Bangladesh.

Hundreds of leaders and activists of BCL had gathered at the Raju Memorial Sculpture and Madhur Canteen areas of the DU since Monday morning to celebrate the Indian government's decision of honouring Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Gandhi Peace Prize-2020.

Indian PM Modi is scheduled to visit Dhaka on March 26-27 to attend the celebrations of Mujib Borsho and the golden jubilee of independence.