

**BANGLADESH
UPDATE**



6,885
New cases in 24hrs



14,12,218
Total cases



23,988
Deaths



12,81,389
Recoveries

**GLOBAL
UPDATE**



4,364,042
Deaths



207,338,803
Total cases

BANGABANDHU'S LIFE, WORK TO BE DISPLAYED AT TIMES SQUARE

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The life and works of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will be screened on the famous Times Square billboard in New York for 24 hours beginning from midnight until 11:59 pm today as part of the celebrations for Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

The exhibition will run on the iconic "Ball Drop" billboard at Times Square for 15 seconds every two minutes today on Bangladesh's national mourning day.

The audiovisual will appear a total of 720 times at Times Square, which draws more than 400,000 tourists every day.

The initiative has been spearheaded by Fahim Feroj, a Bangladeshi-American entrepreneur and chief executive officer of publicity firm NY Dreams Production and supported by Bangladeshi companies BD Finance, Anwar Group, Exim Bank and some other individuals.

The audiovisual clip consists of different memorable moments of Bangladesh's founding father, including his historic March 7th speech, which was listed by the UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

"We -- all Bangladeshis or Bangladeshis -- take pride in having an iconic figure like Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as our Father of the Nation. Imagine the audio-visual -- Bangabandhu is delivering the fiery speech of March 7 when he called for the independence of Bangladesh," Feroj said in a recent talk show.

Feroj said he took the initiative with his own fund but later the sponsors came forward.

"We have been looking forward to getting an exposure at the historic Times Square and Empire State Building for long... now we got the chance," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen last week.

The screening on Bangabandhu and the country's economic progress at Times Square will help Bangladesh to brighten its global branding, he added.

Such events would play a very effective role in highlighting the life and ideals of Bangabandhu to the expatriate Bangladeshis, especially the second and third-generation Bangladeshi-Americans, said M Shahidul Islam, Bangladesh's ambassador to the US.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh missions abroad have taken various initiatives to observe the National Mourning Day.

Bangladesh Embassy in Ankara in association with Ankara City Corporation has organised a four-day photo exhibition beginning on August 12 at the Cultural Centre in Ankara.

It features the political struggles for the independence of Bangladesh, the cultural and social aspects of Bangladesh and Bangabandhu.

The photos at the exhibition reflected the lifelong activities of the Father of the Nation, said Mosud Mannan Bangladesh Ambassador to Turkey.

This exhibition will inspire the youths of Turkey to understand the ideals of Bangabandhu, who was not only a leader of Bangladeshis but also of the oppressed people of the world, he said.

A dawn darker than night

FROM PAGE 1

Haque Dalim, Major Noor Chowdhury, Captain Mohammed Bazul Huda, and Major Shahriar Rashid gathered there.

Around the same time, a group of soldiers led by Major Rashid collected arms and ammunition from the armoury of the 2nd Field Artillery. Preparations for carrying out a massacre in which Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members would be killed were almost done.

As the clock struck half past 12, Major Farooq Rahman, one of the masterminds of the carnage -- the most horrific one in the history of Bangladesh -- disclosed the operation plan before the officers.

Events went ahead according to their plan. Around 4:00am in the morning, the tanks rumbled down the empty roads of Dhaka to their destinations.

Thus began the fateful mission that was to change the country's destiny forever.

One team headed for President Mujib's residence in Dhanmondi while another moved towards Minto Road and the third group went to another part of Dhanmondi where Bangabandhu's nephew Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni lived with his family.

Major Dalim took charge of attacking the house of Bangabandhu's brother-in-law Abdur Rab Serniabat on Minto Road. Risaldar Moslemuddin Khan was given the responsibility of attacking Sheikh Moni's house.

Major Shahriar was in charge of the radio station, the university, and New Market area. The group was also given the responsibility to repel any attack by the BDR at Pilkhana.

Major Farooq Rahman himself took the responsibility of resisting the security forces at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar with his tanks, although there was no ammunition in those.

It was around the time for changing the guard at Bangabandhu's residence at House 677 of Road 32.

Inside the house, everybody was still in deep sleep: President Mujib, his wife Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, their sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russell, daughters-in-law, and his brother Sheikh Naser.

Nurul Islam Khan, the then deputy superintendent of police, was supervising the guards that night. With him was Bangabandhu's personal assistant AFM Mohitul Islam who went to bed at around one in the morning.

Little did they imagine that they would be waking up to a morning darker than night.

Suddenly, Huda and Nur aimed their Sten guns at Bangabandhu and pulled the triggers. The president collapsed on the stairs. He was dead. His body lay there with blood flowing from the landing down the stairs. Blood streaked the walls as well. The killers now ran riot in the house. The other members of the family holed up inside the bathroom attached to the main bedroom. But that did not help.



Around 4:30am to 5:00am, Mohitul was awakened by telephone mechanic Abdul Matin, who informed him that President Mujib was on the telephone line.

"Serniabat's house came under attack by some armed men!" Bangabandhu spoke on the phone from his first floor bedroom. "Get the police control room immediately."

Mohitul dialled the police but failed to get through. Just then Mujib came down to the office room and asked whether he could contact the police control room. Mohitul replied in the negative.

Mohitul finally got the line of the Gono Bhaban exchange. Someone picked up the phone there but would not speak. The president took the handset himself and spoke into it: "This is President Sheikh Mujib speaking."

Right at that moment, a barrage of bullets shattered the windowpanes and hit the wall of the office room. The President himself lay down on the floor, pulling Mohitul to the ground to save him from bullets.

The building seemed to be trembling with rumbles of heavy gunshots from outside that continued for a while.

As the gunfire paused for a moment, Bangabandhu went on his way upstairs and managed to talk to Gen Shafiullah

over phone and asked him to send forces immediately as his house was under attack.

Shafiullah replied: "I am doing something; can you get out of the house?"

House help Abdul rushed to the first floor and brought Bangabandhu's white panjabi and glasses. Putting those on, the president came out on the veranda.

"There are shootings all around. What are you doing?" he shouted at the sentries.

Nurul replied: "Sir, there has been an attack."

Bangabandhu went back to the upper floor.

In the meantime, Sheikh Kamal came down to the ground floor.

He asked Nurul whether the army had come. As he nodded, Kamal said, "Brothers from the army! Come inside!" Kamal said this twice loudly.

There was an eerie silence for a minute.

Just then five to six army men in khaki and black fatigues appeared holding submachine guns in their hands. One had a Sten gun. They barged into the residence and shouted: "Hands up!"

Bewildered at what was happening, Kamal said, "I am Sheikh Mujib's son."

Without any warning, Bazul Huda shot Kamal in the leg. Kamal jumped to

Mohitul's side.

"Don't shoot him," Mohitul pleaded, "He is Sheikh Kamal. Sheikh Mujib's son."

Upon hearing this, Bazul Huda again fired at Kamal. He lay dead.

The killers went upstairs. Around 20-25 more people in army uniform joined them. Before going upstairs, they asked some soldiers to keep watch on Mohitul and others gathered near the gate and hurried to the first floor.

Mohitul could hear intermittent gunfire and the cries of the women upstairs. He also heard the loud voice of Bangabandhu.

Havildar Md Quddus Sikder, who had arrived at the residence around 4:45am on his regular duty, saw the terrible events unfold. He was part of the president's protection detail in the house and was also detained.

Huda and Nur ordered Quddus to follow them as they went up to the first floor along with their troops. As they walked up to the landing of the staircase, they saw Major Mohiuddin and his soldiers leading Bangabandhu down.

"Where is Kamal? What do you want?" Mujib demanded.

"You have to come with us, Sir," Huda stammered.

Nobody answered. Suddenly, Huda and Nur aimed their

Sten guns at Bangabandhu and pulled the triggers.

The president collapsed on the stairs. He was dead. His body lay there with blood flowing from the landing down the stairs. Blood streaked the walls as well.

The killers now ran riot in the house. The other members of the family holed up inside the bathroom attached to the main bedroom. But that did not help.

Just then the killers returned and entered the bedroom. After a few impatient knocks, they shot at the door.

Begum Mujib opened it.

She pleaded with the killers to spare her family members. The killers sprayed bullets at Begum Mujib, Sheikh Jamal, his wife Rosy, and Kamal's wife Sultana. The bodies fell in a heap.

Then they took Sheikh Naser and Sheikh Russell to the ground floor and made them stand in a line. Naser pleaded with them not to kill him, but the killers took him into the bathroom attached to Mohitul's office and shot him.

Naser begged for water, but a soldier shot him dead.

What happened next was the cruellest. Trembling, Russell, Bangabandhu's 10-year-old son, wailed to be taken to his mother. Clutching Mohitul, he asked in a terrified voice: "Bhaiya, will they kill me too?"

"No bhaiya, they won't kill you," Mohitul had tried to console him.

One of the soldiers took Russell upstairs to the spot where his mother lay dead. Then came a burst of gunfire.

Shortly, Major Farooq met Huda at the gate and asked him something.

"All are finished," Huda replied.

As the Islamic call to prayer was heard in the mosques of the city, the assassins went about ransacking Bangabandhu's house and laying hands on everything of value they could find.

The group of soldiers which had earlier made its way to Minto Road, finished off Serniabat and his family.

In another part of Dhanmondi, soldiers rushed into the home of Sheikh Moni and shot him and his pregnant wife Arzoo, in front of their two young children.

Early on the morning of August 16, the soldiers collected the bodies and placed them in rough, makeshift coffins.

Except for Bangabandhu's body, all the other corpses were hastily buried in the cemetery in Banani.

Late in the afternoon, the body of Bangabandhu was laid to rest beside the graves of his parents in the village.

With the killings, things were not really finished. A new chapter unfolded in the history of the newly independent Bangladesh, taking the country backward.

The killers installed Khandaker Mushtaque, the commerce minister of Bangabandhu's government, as the president on the afternoon of August 15.

Mushtaque, who was a part of the heinous conspiracy, happily grabbed the presidency paying no heed to the constitution that barred him from assuming the office.

He was grateful to the killers. In his address to the nation, Mushtaque called the coup "changeover as historic necessities" and portrayed the killers as "the brightest son of the soil."

[The report is prepared based on the testimonies and depositions of AFM Mohitul Islam, Nurul Islam Khan and Quddus Sikder, and the book "Three army coups and some untold tales" by Lt Col MA Hamid.]

How to remember a Hero?

FROM PAGE 1

country is also the intellectual legacy of its people. But in the sense of building the future a country is a bundle of potentials -- potentials to develop, improve, grow, to conquer adversity, to attain justice, to evolve into something better. It is the opening of doors to a bright future where Sheikh Mujibur Rahman becomes our biggest, brightest and most relevant hero. Whether we are able to achieve that brilliant future fully, partly or at all is another question. But he led us to open that door. That is a fact, indelible in our mind and will rest there forever.

But that hero's life was cut short, and most brutally at that. Why was the man who fulfilled our greatest dream, our innermost urge, our most cherished goal and brought into global reality our political identity so savagely killed?

Their purpose was to strike at the principles of our independence war, values of democracy, secularism, socialism and nationalism. They wanted to distort and if possible, destroy what we already had but more importantly take away from us our magnificent potentials.

As for democracy, how could the killers have anything to do with it, secularism they did not believe in, socialism they distorted and nationalism they defined in a way that it was contrary to its original purpose?

The government of General Ziaur Rahman clearly worked to protect Bangabandhu's killers. He continued with their foreign postings instead of bringing them home and trying them for the heinous crime that they had committed. Even when one of them returned and instigated indiscipline in the armed forces he was handled with kid gloves and never held accountable. One of his most ignominious actions, and we have written about it many



A family photo of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

times in the past including while Khaleda Zia was in power, was the Indemnity Act. This gave constitutional protection to the self-proclaimed killers and made it impossible for any legal action to be taken against them. For several years we were perhaps the only country in the world that gave constitutional protection to those the whole world knew to be killers because they proudly proclaimed so.

Gen HM Ershad, perhaps not as

blatantly, followed the same policy of appeasing the killers. He made no attempt to bring the killers to justice who continued to roam the world on taxpayers' money. He never bothered to touch the Indemnity Act.

Khaleda Zia's first government -- 1991-96 -- followed meticulously the line set by her late husband. She added a new twist with her so-called birthday celebrations, which had no basis in any official document and

was meant to specifically hurt Sheikh Hasina and her sister. It was designed to make a mockery of the tragedy and to trivialise the significance of the day, not to mention exhibiting low taste and an abysmal lack of sensitivity. Was it the view that the whole nation would be so enamoured by the false birthday celebrations that they would forget the significance of Bangabandhu's murder and the tragedy that befell the nation that day?

And all the while Bangabandhu was slowly, surely but unsuccessfully, being removed from public focus. Leave aside paying a minimum respect to the man who helped create Bangladesh, there was not even a mention of him on occasions such as 26th March, 16th December -- two of the most important days in our nation's history.

Distortion of history came into full force and the Goebbels of the world stood reincarnated in their devilish best. During Zia's time, suddenly the genocide-perpetrating Pakistan army was replaced by the word "Hanadar Bahini" (marauding force) in our history books, school books and official narratives as those responsible for the killings of the millions. Also, attempts were made to establish that our independence movement was triggered by one radio announcement. Nothing much happened before Zia came onto the scene. Decades of struggle since 1948, the Language Movement, the anti-martial law movement, the six-point movement, the 11-point movement -- everything had to be removed, distorted, downplayed only because of Bangabandhu's essential and central role in them.

Bangabandhu's iconic speech, which is now a part of world intellectual heritage and which played such a crucial role in inspiring the nation and motivating the freedom fighters in the field (I know it, because it was our daily source of inspiration during our days as a Mukti Bahini), did not exist for them and the March 7 speech did not happen for those in power from 1975 to 1996.

On a personal note, I think it was the first evening following Sheikh Hasina's assumption of power in 1996 when, while in office, I suddenly heard Bangabandhu's 7th March speech over the radio. It was after 21 years that I heard that speech publicly. I

was overwhelmed with emotion. In my memory I was transported to that magical day, 25 years earlier, when I, along with lakhs of freedom loving people had gathered at the Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) to hear our leader, our hero. Silently, I thanked Sheikh Hasina for giving us back this magnificent legacy. (After so many years in power, the government needs to be more circumspect at the random use of this treasure).

For those of us who lived through it, the tsunami of praises for Bangabandhu in today's Bangladesh makes it difficult to re-live the days of its total drought.

So how do we remember our Hero? His own words give us the best indication as to how he would like us to remember him. In his "Unfinished Memoirs" we read, something he himself scribbled in English, on May 3, 1974, "As a man what concerns mankind concerns me. As a Bengalee, I am involved in all that concerns Bengalees. This involvement is born of, and nourished by love, which gives meaning to my politics and to my very being." The monuments that we build for him must be in the hearts and minds of the people and they must be built with love. The meaning of his politics comes from his unwavering commitment to the people. For those who saw him, lived his politics, participated in what he did and for others who read about him, know for certain that everything he did was for his people -- meaning people's welfare was central to his concerns.

As we build a better Bangladesh for the present and for tomorrow's citizens, let us remember that everything we do must be people centred -- it must add to their welfare, prosperity, intellectual growth and most importantly freedom both of the mind and of the body, especially of the former.