

BANGLADESH UPDATE



6,684
New cases in 24hrs



14,18,902
Total cases



24,175
Deaths



12,92,698
Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



4,373,091
Deaths



207,860,544
Total cases

Bangabandhu's life, work screened at Times Square

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The life and works of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were screened on the famous Times Square billboard in New York yesterday.

It began at 12:01am New York time yesterday and was scheduled to run for 24 hours as part of the celebrations for Bangabandhu's birth centenary.

The expatriate Bangladeshis gathered at Times Square and chanted slogans "Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu" when the picture of Bangabandhu began screening. They brought banners and festoons with them.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen inaugurated the unique event through a video message. Bangladesh Ambassador to the US, M Shahidul Islam, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Rabab Fatima and Bangladesh's Consul General to New York Sadia Faizunnesa among others joined the inaugural event at midnight.

"It was an emotional moment when the audio-visual of the Father of the Nation was being screened. It was a historic moment," Shah Alam Khokon, counsellor of Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC, told this correspondent over the phone from New York yesterday.

The exhibition was being run on the iconic "Ball Drop" billboard for

15 seconds every two minutes on Bangladesh's national mourning day. It is scheduled to 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 foreign ministry also supported the initiative.

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.

"Lakhs of people would see the screening and get to know who Bangabandhu was. It is a proud moment for us," said Fahim Feroj to a private television channel.

The screening on Bangabandhu and the country's economic progress at Times Square will help Bangladesh brighten its global branding, Foreign Minister Momen said recently.

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.



Monsoon tends to clean the filthy water bodies in the capital. But the water in the age-old Dholai Khal continues to remain dark, thanks to mindless dumping of garbage and lack of cleaning.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

In abode of love and grief

FROM PAGE 1

But there is more -- this is the room where no bloodshed took place, while carnage raged on in the rest of the house.

The historic residence of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is for the premier a house where every brick emanates both love and pain at the same time.

It holds her most cherished memories of growing up, and is tainted with the darkest day of her life, when nearly her entire family was annihilated.

It was at the crack of dawn at 5:30am yesterday that the PM, adorned in a black-rimmed white handloom sari, walked in through the gates of her home on Dhanmondi 32. It was at this same time that the army tanks reached the gates of House 677 on this day in 1975.

First, she laid a wreath of roses and tuberose at her father's memorial, commemorating the 46th anniversary of his martyrdom. A smartly turned out contingent of Bangladesh Armed Forces gave a state salute at that time, while the bugle played a tune of grief.

Then she walked over to the staircase where the unparalleled leader of the country's independence was killed.

She stood there for some minutes in solemn silence and then sprinkled red rose petals on the steps where once lay a pool of blood, spilling out of the 18 bullet wounds in Bangabandhu's body. It was at that moment that Hasina could not hold back her tears recalling her nearest and dearest

whom she lost 46 years ago.

Talking to the Daily Star, Bangabandhu Memorial Museum curator Nazrul Islam Khan shared the heart-rending moments of Hasina's visit to her Dhanmondi house.

After visiting the staircase, Hasina went into her old room and spent around 45 minutes inside. The cream-coloured room has a bed and other plain furniture but the walls are empty save for an old gilaf from the Holy Kabah.

She spent the time inside her room offering prayers and reciting the Quran, saying little else out loud.

Her younger brother Sheikh Russel, who was also brutally shot to death, was born in this room.

She and her only sister Sheikh Rehana were in Germany that fateful August in 1975.

After her visit to Dhanmondi 32, Hasina went to the Banani Graveyard where her mother, brothers, and other dear family members were laid to rest. Standing before their graves, she raised her hands to the heavens, seeking eternal peace for their departed souls.

Along with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his spouse Bangamata Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib, their three sons -- Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, and Sheikh Russell -- and 14 others were killed in the bloodshed.

Except for Bangabandhu's body, all the other corpses were hastily buried in the cemetery in Banani on early August 16. Later in the afternoon that day, Bangabandhu's body was laid to rest beside the graves of his parents in Tungipara village.

Nigeria imposes partial curfew after deadly attack

AFP, Abuja

Nigerian authorities yesterday imposed a curfew in parts of central Plateau state, a day after a suspected Christian militia attacked a convoy of 90 Muslims, killing at least 23.

Northwest and central Nigeria have for years struggled with violence between mainly Muslim nomadic herders and Christian farmers over control of resources, water and land.

Condemning the attack, President Muhammadu Buhari said in a statement that this was "not an agriculturalist-pastoralist confrontation -- but rather a direct, brazen and wickedly motivated attack."

On Saturday, "a group of attackers suspected to be Irigwe youths (predominantly Christian)... attacked a convoy of five buses with Muslim faithful," said police spokesman Ubah Ogaba.

13 killed in two road crashes

FROM PAGE 1

Seven people died on the spot, said the police officer, adding that four more were injured and taken to the Chakaria Upazila Health Complex.

Six of the deceased were identified as Purnima Rudra, 30, her child Sarthak Rudra, 3, her mother-in-law Rani Rudra, Ratan Vijay Dey, 52, his wife Madhumita Dey, 40, pedestrian Hajera Begum, 55, and an unidentified woman aged around 25.

The bodies were kept at the local upazila health complex.

The microbus was heading to Chattogram from Cox's Bazar and some of the passengers boarded the vehicle in Dulahazra area shortly before the accident, the OC said.

On Saturday night, six people were killed and 11 others injured when a bus hit a cement-laden truck at Boilor Mothbari on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Mymensingh's Trishal upazila, said Officer-in-charge of Trishal Police Station Mohammad Mainuddin, quoting locals.

The victims were identified as

Shahidul Islam, 45, Kamal Hossain, 38, Nurul Haque, 45, Swadhin, 30, Rifat, 28, from different areas of Mymensingh, and Abdul Mannan, 41, from Manda area in Naogaon, police said.

Of the dead, Swadhin was the conductor of the bus and Rifat was the helper.

OC Mainuddin said the accident happened around 8:15pm on Saturday when the Mymensingh-bound bus hit the cement-laden truck from behind, leaving three bus passengers dead on the spot and 14 others injured, most of whom were in a critical condition.

The injured were taken to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, where three others died, said the OC.

On information, police and firefighters rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies and handed those to family members.

Police seized the vehicles, but the drivers managed to flee. A case was lodged with the police station, said the OC.

[Our Cox's Bazar and Mymensingh correspondents contributed to this report.]

Taliban enter Kabul

FROM PAGE 1

1996-2001 rule, women could not work and punishments such as stoning, whipping and hanging were administered.

The militants sought to project a more moderate face, promising to respect women's rights and protect both foreigners and Afghans.

"We assure the people, particularly in the city of Kabul, that their properties, their lives are safe," Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen told the BBC, saying a transfer of power was expected in days.

Earlier yesterday, the insurgents captured the eastern city of Jalalabad without a fight, giving them control of one of the main highways into landlocked Afghanistan. They also took over the nearby Turkham border post with Pakistan, leaving Kabul airport the only way out of Afghanistan still in government hands.

Like with most of the other captured cities, the seizure of power came after government forces surrendered or retreated.

Many of Kabul's streets were choked by cars and people either trying to rush home or reach the airport, residents said.

"Some people have left their keys in the car and have started walking to the airport," one resident told Reuters. Another said: "People are all going home in fear of fighting."

President Joe Biden on Saturday authorised the deployment of 5,000

US troops to help evacuate citizens and ensure an "orderly and safe" drawdown of military personnel.

He has faced rising domestic criticism after sticking to a plan, initiated by his Republican predecessor Donald Trump, to end the US military mission in Afghanistan by Aug. 31. He again defended his decision.

"An endless American presence in the middle of another country's civil conflict was not acceptable to me," Biden said on Saturday.

"I was the fourth president to preside over an American troop presence in Afghanistan -- two Republicans, two Democrats. I would not, and will not, pass this war onto a fifth," he added.

His Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday dismissed comparisons with the chaotic American departure from Saigon in 1975.

"The fact of the matter is this: We went to Afghanistan 20 years ago with one mission in mind," he said.

"That was to deal with the people that attacked us on 9/11. That mission has been successful."

Despite the uncertainty, Russia yesterday said it saw no need to evacuate its embassy for the time being. Foreign ministry official Zamir Kabulov told Russian news agencies that the country was working with other countries to hold an emergency UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan.

Iran said it had set up camps along the Afghan border to provide temporary refuge to Afghans fleeing their country.

Meanwhile, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday said that nobody should bilaterally recognise the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan, adding it was clear that there would be a new administration in the country very shortly.

"We don't want anybody bilaterally recognising the Taliban," Johnson said in an interview clip, urging the West to work together on Afghanistan through mechanisms such as the United Nations and Nato.

"We want a united position amongst all the like-minded as far as we can get one so that we do whatever we can to prevent Afghanistan lapsing back into being a breeding ground for terror."

Pakistan's government yesterday said it was "closely following" developments in Afghanistan.

Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, the spokesman of the Pakistani foreign ministry, said the Pakistani embassy staff were providing assistance to those needing consular help or passage on flights out of the country.

"Pakistan will continue to support the efforts for political settlement. We hope all Afghan sides will work together to resolve this internal political crisis," he added.

Universities to lead way

FROM PAGE 1

Mother Language Institute on the National Mourning Day, marking the death anniversary of Bangabandhu.

She said if the Covid-19 situation improves to a certain level, in-person classes might resume at universities at first, as the residential students and teachers are being inoculated on a priority basis.

An education ministry official said the health ministry has informed them that till the first week of August, 30,000 out of 34,000 public university teachers who registered for the Covid-19 vaccine have already gotten their jobs.

Around 1.79 lakh university students have registered for the vaccine, of whom around 80,000 have received the first dose and 6,000 have gotten both doses.

All government schoolteachers and 2.78 lakh out of 3.63 lakh non-government teachers at secondary level had been administered both doses of Covid-19 vaccine.

Dipu Moni said any decision to reopen educational institutions depends on the coronavirus situation as the safety of students, teachers and guardians is the government's priority.

Educational institutions have remained shut for nearly 17 months since the Covid-19 outbreak in the country.

On March 17, 2020, the government closed all educational institutions to check the spread of coronavirus. The closure -- recently extended till August 31 -- has led to cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray.

Following the decision to close educational institutions, the government launched TV education programmes through state-run Sangsad television channel for secondary and primary students. Later, it asked all schools to introduce

online education.

Most students in urban areas have access to learning through the internet, but the digital divide has so far proved to be a great disadvantage for underprivileged learners, mainly due to a lack of devices and poor access to the internet.

At the end of last year, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education asked all secondary schools to start giving assignments to students.

All these interim efforts were made so that students do not suffer learning losses during the long closure.

Dipu Moni yesterday said it was seen last year that Covid-19 infection rates dropped significantly in November and December, and this year the government has planned to hold SSC exams in November and HSC exams in December.

Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the government is working on reopening schools, but all depends on the infection rate.

"We will review the situation in late August and any kind of decision regarding the matter will be made after consultation with the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19," he said.

He said the government is also emphasising on secondary schoolteachers getting vaccinated before reopening of schools.

According to education ministry officials, reopening of schools will happen in phases. The education ministry plans to start classes of SSC and HSC examinees of 2021 and 2022 first and their classes can take place two days a week.

Students of classes six to nine will have to go to school once a week. The number of classes will be increased according to the situation, they said.

Dipu Moni yesterday said schools will reopen in phases and all students will not need to attend their classes

for six days -- they will increase the number of classes in phases, after in-person classes resume.

In February this year, the government announced that all schools and colleges will reopen in phases on March 30. As new Covid-19 cases and deaths spiked, they deferred the reopening plan to May 23.

As the infection rate surged again, the government once again had to postpone plans to reopen.

Swathes of Libya without water after sabotage threats

AFP, Tripoli

Libyan authorities have shut water supplies to swathes of the country after gunmen demanding the release of a jailed Gaddafi-era official threatened to sabotage the water network.

Supplies to western and southwestern Libya were interrupted overnight Saturday to yesterday, the Great Man-Made River water authority said.

It took the decision to cut the supply after gunmen Thursday stormed several water distribution centres demanding the release of Abdullah al-Senussi.

A brother-in-law of longtime dictator Moamer Gaddafi, Senussi was sentenced to death in 2015 over his alleged role in attempting to suppress the 2011 uprising that culminated in Gaddafi's ouster and killing.

On Thursday, gunmen gave authorities 72 hours to release Senussi from detention in the capital Tripoli, the water authority said.

If their demands were not met they planned on attacking the network which brings water from underground wells in the Sahara to Tripoli.

TIMELINE OF TALIBAN'S LIGHTNING OFFENSIVE

FROM PAGE 1

JULY 5 - The Taliban say they could present a written peace proposal to the Afghan government as soon as August.

JULY 21 - Taliban insurgents control about a half of the country's districts, according to the senior US general, underlining the scale and speed of their advance.

JULY 25 - The United States vows to continue to support Afghan troops "in the coming weeks" with intensified airstrikes to help them counter Taliban attacks.

AUG 6 - Zaranj in the south of the country becomes the first provincial capital to fall to the Taliban in years. Many more are to follow in the ensuing days, including the prized city of Kunduz in the north.

AUG 13 - Four more provincial capitals fall in a day, including Kandahar, the country's second city and spiritual home of the Taliban. In the west, another key city, Herat, is overrun and veteran commander Mohammad Ismail Khan, one of the leading fighters against the Taliban, is captured.

AUG 14 - The Taliban take the major northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif and, with little resistance, Pul-e-Alam, capital of Logar province just 70 km (40 miles) south of Kabul. The United States sends more troops to help evacuate its civilians from Kabul as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani says he is consulting with local and international partners on next steps.

AUG 15 - The Taliban take the key eastern city of Jalalabad without a fight, effectively surrounding Kabul.

AUG 15 - Taliban insurgents enter Kabul, an interior ministry official says, as the United States evacuate diplomats from its embassy by helicopter.

SOURCE: REUTERS

Canada's Trudeau calls snap elections

AFP, Ottawa

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau yesterday announced snap elections for September 20 to seek a new mandate to steer the nation's pandemic exit, much to the dismay of his rival parties.

Despite rolling out massive pandemic aid, passing a federal budget and other key legislation with opposition backing over the past year, Trudeau -- in office since 2015 -- has lamented that parliament has become dysfunctional.

Not happening

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, about 44 lakh Sinopharm doses arrived in the country as of yesterday even though the health minister earlier said 54 lakh doses of the vaccine would arrive by August 15.

The government suspended administering the first dose of Moderna vaccine, saving the doses in stock to be used as the second jab.

Officials said the regular mass vaccination campaign will continue through 1,005 inoculation points.