

Bangamata's 92nd birth anniversary today

BSS, Dhaka



The 92nd birth anniversary of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, wife of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, will be observed today across the country.

She was born on August 8, 1930, in Tungipara of Gopalganj.

On the fateful night of August 15, 1975, she was killed brutally along with Bangabandhu and most of his family members.

Marking the birth anniversary, the Awami League has arranged for wreaths to be placed at her grave in the capital's Banani at 9:00am.

AL's Dhaka north city unit will distribute food among orphans at Azimpur Orphanage after Zohr prayers.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and other electronic media will broadcast special programmes to mark the day.

President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the eve of the 92nd birth anniversary of Bangamata.

They said Bangamata had played a pivotal role in building the nation, standing by Bangabandhu.

"On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, I pay my deep respects to the memory of this majestic woman," said Hamid in his message.

He said Bangamata always used to live a simple life despite being the wife of the president and prime minister.

On Saturday, the government announced the names of five distinguished women for "Bangamata Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib Padak 2022" for their outstanding contributions to different fields.

The award-giving ceremony will be held at Osmani Memorial Hall in the capital at 10:00am.

In her message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangamata's daughter, said the theme of the 92nd birth anniversary of Fazilatunnesa Mujib is "Mohioshi Bangamata er Chetona, Odommo Bangladesh er Preona", which befits the day.

Bangamata was not only the partner of the father of the nation, but actively supported him in every step, Hasina said.

Her bold and visionary decision in the Agartala Conspiracy Case saved the lives of all the prisoners (raj-bondhi) in the case, the premier said.

She made significant contributions to the 6-point and 11-point movements, she said, adding that Bangamata also played a very important role in delivering the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu.

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Bangamata, both the president and the premier sought eternal peace of her departed soul.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

'Truce agreed' after 31 killed in Gaza

Six children among the dead; 275 hurt in three days of Israeli pounding

REUTERS, Gaza/Jerusalem

Israel and Palestinian militants have agreed to a truce in Gaza from yesterday evening as mediated by Cairo, sources said, after a weekend-long pounding of Palestinian targets by Israel triggered longer-range rocket attacks against its cities.

An Egyptian security source said Israel had agreed to the proposal, while a Palestinian official familiar with Egyptian efforts said the ceasefire would go into effect at 20:00 (1700 GMT).

However, spokespeople for Israel and Islamic Jihad, the faction it has been fighting in Gaza since clashes erupted on Friday, did not confirm this, saying only that they were in contact with Cairo.

Gaza officials said 31 Palestinians, including six children, had been killed while 275 people wounded since Friday. The rockets have paralysed much of southern Israel and sent residents in cities including Tel Aviv and Ashkelon to shelters.

The Egyptian security source said earlier that the proposed truce was to take effect at 21:00 GMT.

The flare-up, recalling preludes to previous Gaza wars, has worried world powers. However, it has been relatively

contained as Hamas, the governing Islamist group in the Gaza Strip and more powerful force than Iranian-backed Islamic Jihad, has so far stayed out.

Yesterday morning, Islamic Jihad extended its range to fire toward Jerusalem in what it described as retaliation for the overnight killing of its southern Gaza commander by Israel - the second such senior officer it has lost in the fighting.

"The blood of the martyrs will not be wasted," Islamic Jihad said in a statement.

The salvo came as religious Jews were fasting in an annual commemoration of two Jerusalem temples destroyed in antiquity. Israel said its Iron Dome interceptor, whose success rate the army put at 97 percent, shot down the rockets just west of the city.

Palestinians dazed by another surge of bloodshed - after outbreaks of war in 2008-09, 2012, 2014 and last year - picked through the ruins of houses to salvage furniture or documents.

"Who wants a war? No one. But we also don't like to keep silent when women, children and leaders are killed," said a Gaza taxi driver who identified himself only as Abu Mohammad. "An eye for an

eye."

Israel put the onus was on Islamic Jihad to stop shooting. "Quiet will be answered with quiet," an army spokesman said.

In another potential flashpoint, Jews marking the Tisha Be'av last visited the site where their ancient temples once stood - the Al Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City.

The scheduled visits affront Palestinians for whom Al Aqsa is a national as well as a religious symbol. Video circulated online showed some Jews trying to pray in defiance of Israeli regulations, as police moved in to stop them and Muslim worshippers shouted in protest.

Israel launched what it called pre-emptive strikes on Friday against what it anticipated would be an Islamic Jihad attack meant to avenge the arrest of a leader of the group in the occupied West Bank. Arrest sweeps against the group have continued in that territory.

The hundreds of rockets fired by Islamic Jihad in response are the reason for the continuing operation, according to Israeli security cabinet minister Gideon Saar.

"To the extent that Islamic Jihad wants to protract this operation, it will regret it," he told Israel's Army Radio.

Farmers get a raw deal

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fertiliser by 37.5 percent to Tk 22 per kg in yet another blow to farmers - many of whom suffered losses and got low crop yields for repeated floods and then extreme heat with scanty rain.

Now the hike in diesel price will have a serious impact on the production of the Boro, a dry season crop that makes up 53 percent of the country's total rice production. It is planted from December to early February and harvested between April and June.

According to Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), around 75 percent of all irrigation equipment is diesel-run and this year around seven lakh tonnes of diesel is required for Boro season.

Hasneen Jahan, head of Department of Agricultural Economics at Bangladesh Agricultural University, said the Boro production cost would increase due

to the diesel price hike.

"If farmers give up the Boro cultivation considering the production cost, food security will be threatened. We have to see how the farmers react in Boro season," she said.

Mohammad Jahangir Alam, a professor of the Department of Agribusiness and Marketing at the university, said farmers will be under pressure as the cost of production will increase.

Small and marginalised farmers, who account for 84 percent of the total farmers in the country, will face the most severe consequence. "Consumers will surely have to pay more for buying rice. But if farmers don't get fair prices, they will be discouraged from growing rice," he said.

AMM Shawkat Ali, a former food adviser to a caretaker government, said this will increase the cost of production and subsequently the market price will go up. "Consumers, especially the lower-income groups,

will be hit hard."

He recommended the government give subsidies for irrigation to ease the burden of farmers.

'DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO'
Akhter Kazi from Noldanga in Natore spent Tk 6,000 for Boro irrigation per acre last year. This year he will have to spend over Tk 2,500 as additional irrigation cost, he said.

"We do not know what to do in this situation."

Even if a farmer irrigates his land by an electricity-run pump, he still has to bear additional cost in using diesel-fuelled farm equipment like tiller or threshing machine.

"Earlier, we were paying Tk 300 for using a power tiller to plough one high land. But after the diesel price hike, the cost has gone up to Tk 450," said Soybur Rahman, a farmer from Godagari upazila, Rajshahi. "We need to plough our land four times - that means an additional Tk 600."

Yesterday, Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razaque at a

programme in Cumilla said that due to the fuel price rise, there will be an overall impact on the agricultural sector.

Talking to The Daily Star later, he said they were now observing the situation and will take steps considering the situation when the Boro cultivation will start.

Md Benojir Alam, director general at Department of Agricultural Extension, said the government has a budget of Tk 500 crore as stimulus package for the agricultural sector, but no decision has been made as to whether any amount will be given to the farmers.

Dhirendra Chandra Debnath, member director (minor irrigation), BADC, said they have long been campaigning to stop the waste of water during irrigation but could not make them aware.

"After the fuel price hike, farmers hopefully will use water judiciously."

[Our Natore correspondent contributed to the story]

34k Bangladeshis to get papers

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of them were regularised, he said, citing Maldivian officials.

After regularisation, Bangladeshi workers will get legal support and also come under health insurance coverage there, he added.

After some back and forth amid the pandemic, the amnesty programme got pace recently following resumption of different activities, Sohail added.

An estimated 1,00,000 Bangladeshis are currently involved in different sectors, mainly in construction, in the Maldives, making them the largest migrant community in the small South Asian country.

Many of them became undocumented at different times for various reasons after entering the country through proper channels, said sources at the high commission.

The Maldives is currently not hiring low-skilled workers from Bangladesh because of a large number of Bangladeshi undocumented workers there, the sources added.

Wishing anonymity, a Bangladeshi worker said due to him being undocumented, he sends money home either through informal channel or seeks help from fellow documented workers to do it.

He said an "identity card" is required to send money home via a bank which he does not have.

Imran Hossain Talukdar, a Bangladeshi employed at a company that sells marine equipment in Malé, said many Bangladeshi workers send money home via hundi as they are not documented workers.

Besides, if they are not paid, they cannot complain to the authorities.

Hundi is an illegal cross-boundary financial transaction system.

REMITTANCE FALLS
According to Bangladesh Bank data, Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Maldives sent home \$44.74 million and \$46.03 million in remittance in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years respectively.

But the remittance dropped to only \$21.59 million in 2021-2022 fiscal year.

Maintain peace, ignore provocations

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Exchange Programme, and an MoU between Dhaka University's Institute of Oceanography and Ministry of Natural Resources of China for Cooperation on Marine Science and Technology.

The Chinese FM then met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban for 35 minutes.

Briefing journalists, Momen said the Chinese minister informed that a section of Taiwanese people is being provoked against the sovereignty of China, which is unacceptable.

"Wang said there are separatists in various countries and if they are provoked by the third world countries, there will be no peace in the world. He also said many are jealous of the China's development."

Momen further said, "We support the One China Policy. Our prime minister said peace and stability

is of utmost importance now and requested [China] to have patience. Many may provoke [them], but there has to be patience."

The PM also said her only goal is getting her people out of poverty, and China's support is most welcome in this regard.

Momen added that there appears to be a cold war in the offing, and Bangladesh needs to take a position to halt it.

Referring to the Non-Aligned Movement by some countries in the 1960s, he said it worked quite well.

"Now the world is in a crisis. Under this situation, as an independent country, we want to take a stance. I hope this will be appreciated," Momen said, adding that some may not be happy with the stance but it will continue its policy of friendship with all.

Wang Yi left for Mongolia from

Dhaka around 10:45am yesterday.

AREAS OF DISCUSSION

PM Hasina told Wang Yi that South Asia, Southeast Asia and China could work together for economic progress by addressing challenges caused by the Russia-Ukraine war. People across the world are enduring difficult times, BSS quoted her as saying.

Asked if Wang offered Bangladesh to be part of Global Development Initiative (GDI) and Global Security Initiative (GSI), Shahriar Alam, state minister for foreign affairs, said they discussed it in detail but it was up to China how much would be disclosed.

However, Momen, during his briefing in the afternoon, said that only the GDI was discussed at his meeting with his Chinese counterpart.

Foreign ministry officials said China wants to share its model

of development and support the countries that become part of it.

During the meeting, Wang also said they would allow 98 percent, up from 97, products of Bangladesh for export to China under the duty-free regime. The decision will be effective from September 1.

Momen said some important products, including RMG, vegetables and pharmaceuticals, will be included in the export items, and Bangladesh can significantly increase its export to China, which is now only \$600 million a year.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's import from China is worth \$13 billion.

Momen also told Wang to use Bangladesh IT experts as the country has 700,000 of them ready to provide services.

"We said that since you are supporting our development, invest

more here. We need it."

He added that Wang agreed and proposed signing an MoU on a Public Private Partnership cooperation framework.

Presently, in most cases Bangladesh takes out loans for implementing infrastructure projects, but under the PPP model, Chinese private companies can go for joint venture projects with Bangladesh to make them commercially competitive, a foreign ministry official said.

During Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Bangladesh in 2016, the two countries signed framework agreement for 27 projects worth about \$20 billion. Out of that, eight projects were undertaken and \$3.8 billion was disbursed so far.

Dhaka requested Beijing to speed up fund disbursement and project implementation, said Momen. He added that there are also issues

Man gets life term for raping madrasa girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A Tangail court yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for raping a madrasa student in 2016.

Mohammad Robin, 30, was also fined Tk 1 lakh, in default, another year in prison.

Judge Khaleda Yasmin, of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Tangail, passed the order.

The court acquitted another accused in the case as charges against her could not be proved.

The victim was raped on July 7, 2016, and her mother filed a case against Robin and four others with Sakhipur Police Station the next day, said the tribunal's Additional Public Prosecutor Abdul Koddus.

Acid attack on two siblings in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Two brothers suffered severe burn injuries in Dhaka's Savar as their neighbours allegedly threw acid on them following a dispute over a land on Saturday noon.

Nazir Hossen, 51, and Selim Ahmed, 31, received primary treatment at Savar Upazila Health Complex, said Rubina Parvin, resident medical officer of the healthcare facility.

They were later referred to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital as their injuries were critical, she added.

A case was filed against seven named and three unnamed people in this connection, said Kazi Mainul Islam, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station.

MIRSARAI TRAGEDY

Another victim dies, death toll now 13

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Another victim of the Mirsarai train-microbus collision lost the battle for life at Chattogram Medical College Hospital yesterday, raising the death toll in the tragedy to 13.

Tasmir Hasan, 16, of Khandakia village in Chattogram's Hathazari upazila, succumbed to his injuries at the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital around 10pm Saturday, doctor Noman Khaled Chowdhury, of neurosurgery, told The Daily Star.

Four more victims have been undergoing treatment at the CMCH, he added.

Earlier, another victim of the Mirsarai train-microbus collision named Ayat Hossain died in the same unit Friday.

Amnesty regrets 'distress' caused by report rebuking Ukraine

REUTERS, Kyiv

Amnesty International yesterday apologised for "distress and anger" caused by a report accusing Ukraine of endangering civilians which infuriated President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and triggered the resignation of its Kyiv office head.