

Bangladesh an example for others to emulate

Says UN's resident coordinator on Victory Day

BSS, Dhaka

Defying all odds, Bangladesh made itself an example for other countries to emulate, United Nations Resident

Coordinator in Dhaka Gwyn Lewis said yesterday while greeting the nation on its 51st Victory Day.

"On the eve of the 51st anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, the United Nations stands with Bangladesh in partnership and wishes all Bangladeshi nationals, in the country and abroad, a very happy Victory Day," she said in a statement.

The UN RC said Bangladesh has been on an extraordinary voyage from being a war and famine-ravaged newborn nation, to its current standing as a UN member state standing at the threshold of LDC graduation, and providing shelter to nearly a million Rohingya refugees.

"Bangladesh's achievements in human development and disaster response, long before it became a middle-income country, made it an example for other countries to emulate," she wrote.

The statement said Bangladesh too has contributed to shaping the UN's development agenda and peace operations globally. Bangladesh has also been a vocal advocate for multilateralism, climate justice and the interests of least developed countries.

It said Bangladesh sponsored the Culture of Peace resolution that was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1999 and it was thanks to Bangladesh's advocacy that the UN General Assembly recognised the International Mother Language Day in 2008.

"Bangladesh's advocacy for the rights of the most vulnerable, and its constitution illustrates the country's determination to be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed," Lewis wrote.



People shelter inside a metro station during massive Russian missile attacks in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russian missiles rain down on Ukraine

Emergency power shutdown announced as energy facilities hit; EU agrees fresh sanctions on Moscow

AGENCIES

Russia fired more than 70 missiles during yesterday's morning rush hour in one of its biggest attacks on Ukraine since the start of the war, forcing Kyiv to introduce emergency power cuts nationwide, Ukrainian officials said.

Two people were killed when an apartment block was hit in central Kryvyi Rih and another died in shelling in Kherson in the south, they said. Russian-installed officials in occupied eastern Ukraine said 12 people had died in Ukrainian shelling.

Kyiv warned late on Thursday that Moscow planned a new all-out offensive early next year, around a year after its

February 24 invasion, which has destroyed huge areas of Ukraine but brought little of it under Moscow's control.

Russia has rained missiles on Ukrainian energy infrastructure almost weekly since early October after several battlefield defeats, but yesterday's attack seemed to have caused more damage than many others and snow and ice is now widespread.

Russia had flown warplanes near Ukraine to try to distract its air defences, Ukraine's air force said. Its army chief said 60 of 76 Russian missiles had been shot down but Energy Minister German Galushchenko said at least nine power generating facilities had been hit.

"They want to destroy us, and make us

slaves. But we will not surrender. We will endure," said Lidiya Vasilieva, 53, as she headed for shelter at a Kyiv railway station.

Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called on Ukraine's allies to bolster supplies of weapons, reports AFP.

European Union leaders agreed on Thursday to provide 18 billion euros in financing to Ukraine next year and hit Moscow with a ninth package of sanctions, including barring investment in its mining industry.

The US military said it would expand training in Germany of Ukrainian military personnel and the US Senate passed a bill providing Ukraine with at least \$800 million in additional security assistance in 2023.

4 nations draw up roadmap

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delegates from the four countries met in Nepal on December 14 and 15 to draw up the Kathmandu Roadmap for improving air quality in the Indo-Gangetic Plain and Himalayan Foothills. They discussed the issue for two days and finalised the plan on December 15.

PM 2.5, which is basically dust and other matters generally smaller than 2.5 micrometres, is considered most hazardous to health. The particles penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream.

Currently, the annual average PM 2.5 in Bangladesh is around 85 to 90 microgrammes (mcg) per cubic metre. If the level reaches 35 mcg/cubic metre or above in a 24-hour period, the air is considered unhealthy and can cause problems for people with breathing issues such as asthma.

"This is the first transboundary initiative between the four countries. It is a major and important initiative to reduce air pollution in the world's most polluted areas," Md Amirul Kyser, deputy secretary of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, told The Daily Star yesterday. He was part of the delegation from Bangladesh.

He said the four countries agreed to take both national and regional steps

to reduce PM 2.5 to 35 mcg/cubic metre by 2030.

"This initiative was much needed and a timely one," he said, adding that the countries agreed to share their experiences and also the tools used to contain air pollution among themselves.

Kyser said the four countries also agreed to meet regularly to monitor the efforts and findings as such coordination efforts would help enable regional initiatives and policy harmonisation across the region.

"Initially, although four countries have joined, we are expecting the other four countries of ICIMOD – China, Myanmar, Bhutan and Afghanistan – to join the initiative," he added.

The World Bank on Wednesday published a report titled "Striving for Clean Air: Air Pollution and Public Health in South Asia" which says under the predominant wind direction from the northwest to the southeast, 30 percent of the air pollution in three largest cities of Bangladesh – Dhaka, Chattogram, and Khulna – originates in India.

The report also mentions in terms of air pollution in Dhaka, the capital is responsible for just 10 percent while 25 percent originates in other countries.

According to the report, while existing measures by the government

can reduce particulate matter, significant reduction is possible only if territories spanning the airsheds – areas affected by the same air mass – implement coordinated policies.

Currently, over 60 percent of South Asians are exposed to an average 35 mcg/cubic metre of PM2.5 annually. In some parts of the Indo-Gangetic Plain (IGP), it has been seen to spike to as much as 100 mcg/cubic metre – nearly 20 times the upper limit of 5 mcg/cubic metre recommended by the WHO, says the World Bank report.

The report examined multiple scenarios to reduce air pollution with varying degrees of policy implementation and cooperation among countries.

The most cost-effective one would cut the average exposure of PM 2.5 in South Asia to 30 mcg/cubic metre at a cost of \$278 million per microgramme per cubic metre of reduced exposure, and save more than 7,50,000 lives annually.

Welcoming the move, air quality experts said the big question was how the pollution sources would be addressed.

"We have been calling for such an initiative for a long period. It is a very good move. But how will the initiatives be taken to curb the pollution? What is the country-specific roadmap,

and do we have sufficient budget to achieve the target?" said Dhaka University Professor Abdus Salam, an air pollution researcher.

Earlier this month, the World Bank in another report, "Breathing Heavy: New Evidence on Air Pollution and Health in Bangladesh", said air pollution is killing around 80,000 people every year in Bangladesh by causing respiratory problems as well as depression, and wiping out around four percent of the country's GDP.

Children under five years and elderly people with comorbidities such as diabetes, heart or respiratory conditions, are most vulnerable, it said.

The report said in 2019, air pollution was the second largest cause of deaths and disabilities in Bangladesh and cost the country about 3.9 to 4.4 percent of its GDP.

Syed Nazmul Ahsan, director of air quality management at the Department of Environment, said a national committee has been formed recently to control air pollution and surely the committee would chalk out a detailed roadmap.

On November 28, a national committee, headed by the cabinet secretary, was formed to advise the government on how to control air pollution.

Govt needs

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15, 2019, the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs suspended the controversial and flawed list amid nationwide outrage and protests.

A six-member sub-committee comprising six lawmakers was formed in August 2020 to prepare a fresh list but the committee was scrapped as they did not hold any meetings.

On April 13 this year, a three-member committee headed by Shajahan Khan was tasked with the job. Capt AB Tajul Islam and Kazi Firoz Rashid are two other members.

In reply to a question, Rashid said they are holding meetings regularly and they have gotten lists of collaborators from many districts.

"We're being careful so that no one uses this as an opportunity to wrongfully enlist someone's name based on personal enmity," he added.

Earlier, Shajahan Khan told the media that some of the lists provided by the DCs did not seem acceptable as it found no razzakars in many districts.

He said they are also collecting the list of razzakars from the grassroots level in addition to the government management.

"We're collecting information from local commanders of the Liberation War to verify the information," he added.

Exciting, but ultimately meaningless

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Croatia and Morocco will lock horns, not aiming for the ultimate glory but to finish third.

For either Morocco or Croatia, the upsetting feeling of going home with consecutive defeats looms large. If not for the third place play-off, both could have gone home with a euphoric feeling of almost having a shot at glory. But now one of them will take the flight back home with successive losses. And the winner of the contest goes back with the joy of winning a match, no more no less.

But there is a bit more to it. The winner of the third-place contest will walk away with \$27 million, \$15 million less than what the champions will get as prize money. But what does that actually amount to for players who played in the semifinals of the World Cup just a couple of days ago?

FIFA also do not see it that differently. While the final between Argentina and France will take place at the iconic Lusail Stadium which can pack almost 90,000 people, the Khalifa International Stadium, with only half that capacity, will host the

third-place decider.

Portuguese manager Jose Mourinho perhaps encapsulated the whole feeling of playing in the bronze-medal game on the eve of the final.

"In my opinion, this is a game that doesn't make sense," Mourinho said to RT studio in an interview. "I think players, managers, even fans after losing the semi-final they just deserve to go home and have rest and prepare for the next season.

"Nobody likes to play the final of the losers," he added.

To this day, fans and experts alike debate the overall significance or very plainly the achievement of having the all but dead-rubber match, which keeps tired and disappointed losing semifinalists unnecessarily engaged for insignificant distinction.

It is better to finish third than fourth of course, but why go into that contest anyway when there is little at stake?

However, setting aside all the deeper understanding of the bronze-medal duel, these matches, historically, have delivered riveting

contests and bang-on entertainment for fans.

With very little in the game, the teams come into the contest pressure-free and with little baggage. Traditionally, this match has seen goals galore and on Saturday fans can expect nothing less.

Four-time champions Germany have finished third a record four times while Poland, France, Sweden, and Brazil have won the bronze-medal match twice.

Uruguay hold the record for featuring in the most number of third-place matches without winning it. They played the bronze-medal match in 1954, 1970, and 2000.

Two-time World Cup winners Argentina and 2010 winners Spain are the only World Cup-winning teams to not have featured in a third-place play-off.

The Croatia-Morocco contest will undoubtedly take centre stage for their fans and for neutrals it promises to be a good watch, but one that will again raise the question of why such a meaningless game was played again.

Over 100 AL men sued for Jamuna fertilizer factory clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Police yesterday filed a case against more than 100 Awami League men as two factions of the party clashed at the factory of Jamuna Fertilizer Company Ltd in Jamalpur's Sarishabari on Thursday.

Sub-inspector Abdul Malek of Sarishabari Police Station lodged the case against 52 named and some 60 to 65 unnamed people.

At least 10 people, including Mostaq Hossain, husband of Sarishabari Upazila Parishad chairman Jolly Akhter, and local Pogaldigha Union Parishad member Mofazzal Hossain were arrested in this connection, said OC Muhammad Mohabbat Kabir of the police station.

On Thursday afternoon, the clash took place between supporters of Rafiqul Islam, former organising secretary of the upazila unit AL, and Ashraful Alam Manik, chairman Pogaldigha Union Parishad, over establishing supremacy at JFCL.

Eighteen people, including three police personnel, were injured.

Rab arrests 31 muggers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab yesterday claimed to have arrested 31 members of organised mugging gangs from different parts of the capital.

A team of Rab-3 conducted drives in Motijheel, Shahbagh, Sabujbagh, Paltan, Jatrabari, and Bangshal on Thursday night and made the arrests.

It also seized several sharp weapons, mobile phones, and Tk 27,073 from the arrestees, said a Rab press release.

Rab-3 Commanding Officer Lt Col Arif Mohiuddin Ahmed said in primary interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they used to target people at bus and launch terminals, and railway stations.

He said the criminals snatched valuables from pedestrians, and passengers on rickshaw and CNG-run auto rickshaw at knifepoint, adding that, they would continue the drive.

Youth kills man failing to marry his daughter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A youth stabbed to death a man in Pabna Sadar upazila on Thursday night for failing to marry his daughter, said police.

The victim was Farid Hossain, 45, of Bharara village. Quoting locals, Kripa Shindhu Bala, OC of Pabna Sadar Police Station, said Anik Hossain, 26, of Moddho Jamua village, had an "engagement" with Farid's daughter. But she was recently married off to another man.

Enraged by this, Anik attacked Farid when he was returning home after offering prayers at a mosque around 8:00pm. He died on the way to Pabna General Hospital, the police officer said.

A case was filed against six people, including Anik, with the police station.

Nation recalls triumph, tears

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Flanked by senior leaders, Sheikh Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, laid another wreath at the National Memorial as the party chief.

Later, she paid homage to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, by placing two wreaths at his portrait at Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city's Dhanmondi-32.

Freedom fighters, their family members, foreign diplomats, leaders of Awami League, different political and social organisations, and people from all walks of life also paid homage to martyrs.

Along with the government, different socio-political, educational, and cultural institutions and organisations chalked out a series of programmes to celebrate the day.

Discussion meetings were held at the national level on the theme of "Empowering the spirit of the Liberation War and the best use of digital technology in building Sonar Bangla as dreamt by the Father of the Nation."

Aside from this, cities, districts, and upazilas hosted receptions for courageous freedom fighters and the family members of the martyrs.

The national flag was hoisted atop government, semi-government, autonomous and private offices across the country.

On this day, an exhibition of

documentary films and posters based on the history and tradition of the Liberation War was organised at the "Swadhinota Stombha" and the Museum of Suhrawardy Udyan.

Bangladesh embassies around the world held similar events to highlight the significance of the day.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also witnessed the Victory Day parade at national parade square yesterday morning.

The president took salutes and inspected the parade as the chief guest.

The Great Victory Day Parade was held under the supervision of the Armed Forces Division and management of the 9th Infantry Division of the Bangladesh Army.

Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force, police, Coast Guard, Ansar, Border Guard Bangladesh and Bangladesh National Cadet Corps took part in the parade.

On his arrival at the parade venue at about 10:30am, Hamid was received by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque, parliament members and the chiefs of the three services and senior officers of the armed forces division.

The president and the prime minister enjoyed the attractive march past, spectacular fly-past and aerobic display there.

Onus on Argentina, France

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the quarterfinals was given an extra allocation of tickets for matches they reached, but as Albiceleste continued their march towards a 36-year-drought-ending title, there has been a stream of Argentina fans coming into this country without tickets.

Whether the large number of fans get to watch the match on Sunday from inside the Lusail Stadium or on the screens outside, the team were boosted by the return to fitness of Angel Di Maria and the return to the squad for the suspended duo of defenders Gonzalo Montiel and Marcos Acuna.

Argentina captain Lionel Messi, though, skipped training on Thursday more out of caution and in a bid to get into his best shape after sustaining a slight niggle during the semifinal against Croatia.

There was some distressing news from the France camp, however, as several France players reportedly

caught cold, with Raphael Varane, Ibrahima Konate, and Kingsley Coman the latest to fall ill on Friday.

Centre-back Dayot Upamecano and midfielder Adrien Rabiot had already missed semifinal win over Morocco with illness.

It is certainly not good news for France, who will look to become the first team in 60 years to defend the title and add a third to their growing trophy cabinet by beating a side who are searching for their third title too, and a first in 36 years. And ending that long wait for Albiceleste would also lend immortality to their skipper Lionel Messi, who, despite achieving all the accolades in a decorated career, has always been regarded as the second best Argentine to play the sport after Diego Maradona.

With so much at stake, the onus will be on France and Argentina to give the World Cup a fitting ending so that it's tag as the 'best ever' leaves no scope for questions and claims.