

President pays tribute to Bangabandhu at Tungipara

UNB, Dhaka

President Mohammed Sahabuddin yesterday paid tribute to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara in Gopalganj.

He placed a wreath at the mausoleum of the late leader at Tungipara and stood in solemn silence for some time.

A smartly turned-out contingent drawn from the Bangladesh Army, Navy and Air Force presented the state salute while the bugles played the last post.

Members of Parliament Colonel (Retd) Faruk Khan, Sheikh Salahuddin Jewel, Sheikh Helal Uddin, and Sheikh Sarhan Naser Tanmoy, as well as senior officials of the local administration, received the president.

The president's motorcade started from Bangabhaban at 10:13am and it reached Tungipara via Padma Bridge at 12:45pm.

President Sahabuddin offered fatha and munajat, seeking eternal peace for the departed souls of Bangabandhu as well as other martyrs of the August 15 carnage.

The president signed the visitors' book kept on the mausoleum premises.

Subsequently, another wreath was placed at the mausoleum on behalf of the president's family members, led by the president's wife, Dr Rebecca Sultana.

Family members and close relatives, secretaries concerned with the president, and senior civil and military officials accompanied the president during the visit.

Sahabuddin took oath as the 22nd president of Bangladesh on Monday.

4 hurt as steel bridge collapses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Four passengers of a private car were injured after a steel bridge collapsed on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Chelergat in Trishal upazila, Mymensingh yesterday.

The injured were given treatment at Trishal Upazila Health Complex; their condition is not serious, said doctors.

Trishal Police Station OC Md Mainuddin said the accident took place when a Mymensingh-bound lorry carrying heavy electric transformers was crossing the bridge around 6:00pm.

The private car also on the bridge fell and turned turtle, injuring its four passengers, said the OC.

On information, police and fire brigade personnel rushed to the spot and conducted a rescue operation.

The vehicular movement on the highway was mostly unaffected, said the OC.



PHOTO: PTD

President Mohammed Shahabuddin places a wreath at the grave of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Tungipara yesterday.

10 Indian police killed in Maoist attack

AFP, Raipur

Ten police and their driver were killed in India's central Chhattisgarh state yesterday when their vehicle hit an improvised explosive device, an attack police blamed on Maoist rebels.

India's long-running Maoist insurgency began in the 1960s and has cost thousands of lives in the decades since, although violence has waned considerably in recent years.

Yesterday's deaths were the worst casualties for security forces in more than two years and claimed the lives of police reservists returning from a mission to investigate rebel movements in remote Dantewada district.

No rebel group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far.

"They were returning from an operation when the explosion took place targeting their vehicle," senior Chhattisgarh police official Vivekanand, who uses only one name, told AFP.

Footage aired on broadcaster NDTV showed a crater that stretched several feet into the earth, and security forces inspecting mangled vehicle parts strewn about by the blast.

"I pay my tributes to the brave personnel we lost in the attack," Prime Minister

Narendra Modi wrote on Twitter. "Their sacrifice will always be remembered."

Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel told reporters the attack was "very saddening" and pledged to redouble efforts to combat the state's Naxalites, as India's Maoist insurgents are known.

"This battle is in the last leg and we will not spare any Naxalites, and we will make a proper plan to wipe out Naxalism."

India has deployed tens of thousands of forces to battle the rebels across the insurgent-dominated region known as the "Red Corridor", which stretches across several central, southern and eastern states.

Naxal groups say they are fighting for rural people and the poor.

They are believed to be present in more than 10 states across India but are most active in remote parts of the country's interior.

Their strongholds are in areas where much of the population remains mired in poverty and lacks access to critical services.

Delhi has also pumped millions of dollars into infrastructure development in the remote areas dominated by tribal communities, and claims to have confined the armed insurgency to 53 districts in 2020, down from 96 in 2010.

Twenty-two police and paramilitaries were killed in a gun battle with the far-left guerrillas in 2021.

KILLING OF 2 AL MEN Families point finger at rival faction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lakshimpur

Family members yesterday blamed political opponents for the killing of two former ruling party leaders in Lakshimpur as police failed to arrest anyone involved with the incident.

Around 9:30pm on Tuesday, unidentified miscreants opened fire on Abdullah Al Noman, 36, former general secretary of the district unit Jubo League and Rakib Uddin Imam, former organising secretary of the district unit BCL, in the Nagarhat area under Bashikpur union.

They were rushed to Sadar Hospital in critical condition. Noman was declared dead by doctors there, said Sohel Rana, additional superintendent of police.

Rakib was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, but died on the way around 11:30pm, Sohel added.

Tohidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Chandraganj Police Station, said police are conducting drives, but couldn't arrest any suspect.

Asked, the OC refused to comment on the possible motives behind the killings, saying the matter is under investigation.

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1 killed in clash at Habiganj village

UNB, Habiganj

A man was killed and 25 others were injured in a clash between two groups over establishing dominance at Lashimpur village in Lakhai upazila of Habiganj yesterday morning.

Deceased Jahirul Islam, 30, was the son of Abu Siddique.

Nazim Uddin, a neighbour, said there was a long-standing dispute between former UP member Mojibur Rahman and incumbent UP member Hira Mia over establishing supremacy in the village.

The two groups attacked each other, leaving Jahirul and others injured, Lakhai Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Nunu Mia said.

Doctors at Madhabpur Upazila Health Complex declared Jahirul dead on arrival.

Uncle, nephew killed in bus-bike collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A man and his nephew were killed in a head-on collision between their motorcycle and a bus in Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday.

Babul Hossain, 55, and Sohan Hossain, 24, were from Ramnagar under Dinajpur municipality. Babul was a land officer in Phulbari upazila's Aluari union.

Dinajpur Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Tanvirul Islam said the motorcycle was heading towards Phulbari from Sadar.

"When they arrived in Chuniapara village on the Dinajpur-Gobindaganj road around 10:00am, a speeding bus collided head-on with the bike as it was overtaking another bus, leaving them dead on the spot."

Police seized the bus, but the driver and his helper fled the scene, said the police officer.

Schoolgirl drowns in pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A child died by drowning in a pond in Sirajdikhan upazila, Munshiganj, yesterday.

The incident took place at Thoirgaon village under the Kola union of the upazila at around 11:00am.

The deceased was identified as Oishee Roy, 11, daughter of Gopal Roy, from Kamargaon village under Bhagyakul union of Sreenagar upazila in the district. She was a sixth grader at Bhagyakul Harendralal High School.

Last week, Oishee came to visit her uncle, Nayan Barai, in Thairgaon.

Yesterday around noon, she and some children went to bathe in a pond near her uncle's house and later drowned.

She was rescued by locals and taken to the Ishapura Health Complex, where doctors declared her dead.

Oishee did not know how to swim, said her uncle Nayan Baroi.

'Japan has a special place in our hearts'

FROM PAGE 1

local communities and requested Japan to use its channel of communication with Myanmar to find a durable solution.

Kishida said, "Bangladesh has sheltered over one million displaced persons from Myanmar, and we will continue to support its endeavour."

He added that both the countries will work to increase bilateral relations in different areas and expand cooperation in the international community.

The countries, as strategic partners, have expressed their commitment to uphold free and open international order based on the rule of law at a time when the international order stands at a historic turning point, he said.

"In the economic field, we agreed to make every progress through joint studies on the possibilities of Japan-Bangladesh Economic Partnership Agreement," he said.

Bangladesh's remarkable economic development makes it an attractive investment destination, and the establishment of economic zones and improvement of the investment environment will further strengthen economic relations between the two countries.

The prime ministers also

THE 8 DEALS

- Cooperation on agricultural research, development, capacity building
- Collaboration in ensuring customs laws application
- Defence cooperation on dialogue, visits, training, technology transfer
- Cooperation on cyber security and ICT
- Promotion of intellectual property rights system
- Collaboration in environmentally sound ship recycling
- Cooperation on metro rail policy, laws, and regulations
- A framework to jointly explore ways to upgrade Bangladesh's industries

discussed the Moheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative and the BIG-B Initiative, which aims to connect the Bay of Bengal and the neighbouring regions and to accelerate industrial agglomeration in Dhaka, Chattogram and Cox's Bazar and beyond.

The prime ministers expect the initiative, which will make use of

Japan's advanced technologies and development experiences, to yield mutual benefits and prosperity for both the countries.

Hasina announced that the Dhaka-Narita direct flights would start operation by this year.

The excellent understanding, friendship and cooperation that exist between the people and governments of the two countries would grow stronger in the years ahead, she said as she thanked the Japanese government for being one of the largest development partners of Bangladesh.

Japan has a very special place in the hearts of Bangladeshis people. It is among the few countries that gave early recognition to Bangladesh after its liberation, she said.

"The historic visit of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Japan in October 1973 laid the foundation of our lasting friendship."

Kishida received Hasina at the entrance hall of the Japanese Prime Minister's Office. Japan rolled out the red carpet and gave her the guard of honour at the airport.

After the 3.5-hour meeting, both the prime ministers signed the joint statement.

Briefing reporters in Tokyo, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said the new strategic partnership will be a framework for the countries' diplomatic relations in the next 50 years.

Through the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt, Japan will help Bangladesh strengthen regional connectivity, infrastructure development, and improve the environment for investment, he said, adding that Japan will make more investment in Bangladesh.

Japan's PM Kishida announced Tk 2,400 crore for Bangladesh's budget support and he accepted PM Hasina's invitation to visit Bangladesh.

State Minister Shahriar Alam said with Japan's support, Matarbari is becoming a transport and energy hub. North-east India, Nepal and Bhutan can also be connected through Matarbari.

PM MEETS JAPAN EMPEROR

Hasina met Japan Emperor of Naruhito at the Imperial Palace at 3:00pm local time, her Deputy Press Secretary KM Shakhawat Hossain told BSS.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi among other dignitaries paid separate calls on the prime minister at Akasaka Palace.

BNP goes for all-out boycott of city polls

FROM PAGE 1

The election in Gazipur will be held on May 25, Khulna and Barishal on June 12, while Rajshahi and Sylhet on June 21.

Insiders say the BNP standing committee, the highest policy-making body of the party, decided to start counselling the potential candidates to keep them away from the electoral process.

The committee sat on Tuesday night to discuss the city polls when party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman joined virtually from London.

Meeting sources said the party reaffirmed that it wouldn't join the city polls and if anyone violates the

party decision, organisational steps will be taken against them.

The meeting discussed the names that surfaced in the media as aspirants though none of them communicated with the party about contesting the polls.

The standing committee believes former lawmaker Nazrul Islam Manjur of Khulna, ex-Barishal mayor Mujibur Rahman Sarwar and former Rajshahi mayor Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul will not contest the polls, said meeting sources.

None from Gazipur communicated with the party to contest the polls but the central leaders are sceptical about Sylhet Mayor Ariful Huq Chowdhury.

The party will watch what move Arif makes in the coming days.

Arif at a recent programme in London said he would not join the polls but on return, he said he has a surprise for all. The mayor is yet to disclose that.

"If anyone wants to be a mayoral or councillor candidate, the top leadership will first try to make him understand that the party is in a movement. If the person stands in the polls, the movement will be hampered," said a standing committee member, wishing not to be named.

The top brass will also remind the aspirants of what happened to those who contested elections earlier

defying party orders.

"If anyone still contests the polls, disciplinary action will be taken. If party leaders holding any portfolio encourages the aspirants to contest the polls, action would be taken against them too."

Party sources said expulsion is the toughest action and the top leaders would try to avoid it as such a step may also adversely impact the ongoing movement.

The BNP and like-minded political parties have been on the streets since December 24 last year to realise their 10-point demand, including resignation of the government and election under a nonpartisan

caretaker government.

The party has not contested any election under the government since March 2021.

In 2022, going beyond the party decision, BNP leaders Taimur Alam Khandaker and Monirul Haque Saku contested the last polls to Narayanganj and Cumilla city corporations as independents and both lost. The party expelled them.

In 2018, the Awami League candidates won four of these mayoral posts while the BNP nominee bagged one.

The opposition party's candidates won all five mayoral polls in those cities in 2013.

Evacuation of Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1

Since April 15, local staffers have not been able to go to the embassy premises.

Amid this situation, Bangladesh has decided to evacuate its citizens and instructed them to register online for the purpose.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, CDA Tareq Ahmed said, "Nearly 500 Bangladeshis have registered. We are expecting to start their evacuation in early May."

Initially, the Bangladeshis will be taken to Port Sudan [a city about 700km from Khartoum] by bus and from there they will be taken to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia by ship through the Red Sea.

From Jeddah, they will be flown to Bangladesh with assistance from the Bangladesh mission there, he said.

"Earlier, we had decided to start the evacuation process on April 30. However, as many other countries are also evacuating their nationals through the Port Sudan, there is a shortage of accommodation there. So, we may not be able to arrange proper accommodation if we try to take our citizens there immediately,"

the CDA said.

"Many [Bangladeshis] might not have proper documents. We will issue travel permits for them at Port Sudan before the ship starts for Jeddah."

He added that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has instructed the Bangladesh mission in Sudan to use the best available options for the evacuation process.

The Bangladeshis will be evacuated in batches, he further said.

Foreign ministry officials said some 1,500 Bangladeshis, who mostly work in the construction or domestic work sectors, are spread across Sudan.

It is not a labour-hiring country, but some Bangladeshis go there and move to other countries like Libya later.

With the scope of such migration now diminished, many who could not move to other countries now stay and work in Sudan, they added.

9 shops gutted in Narail fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Nine shops were gutted in a fire that broke out at a diesel shop at Shitalbati Sweet Gate Bazar in Kalia upazila, Narail yesterday around 10:30am.

Soon, the fire spread to the adjacent shops but locals managed to put out the blaze in one hour, said Yasin Ali, the duty officer of Kalia Fire Service and Civil Defence.

He said it took some time for firefighters to reach the area as they have to cross the Madhumati river to get there.

The fire originated from an electrical short circuit, Yasin Ali said.

Kamrul Mollah, one of the affected traders, said the fire caused damage worth a few crores of taka.