

Dhaka: The nation yesterday observed the Independence and National Day in a very limited scale and specially on virtual media yesterday as the government has suspended all scheduled programmes in the wake of the deadly novel coronavirus.

On Wednesday, President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages extending heartfelt greetings and warm felicitations to the countrymen living both at home and abroad.

The government suspended scheduled programme of paying homage to 1971 Liberation War martyrs at the National Memorial at Savar.

Usually on that day, President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina place wreaths early in the morning as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the martyrs.

But this year, all programmes were suspended as the government declared 10-day general holidays from yesterday to April 4, suspended operation of public transports, trains, vessels and domestic flights till April 4 to check the spread of the deadly coronavirus pandemic that has already claimed over 20,000 lives across the world.

However, marking the Independence Day, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) teachers, students, officials and employees paid glowing tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his mural on the premises of B-Block of the university.

BSMMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Kanak Kanti Barua, Pro-Vice Chancellor (academic) Prof Sahana Akhter Rahman, Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Muhammad Rafiqul Alam, Treasurer Prof Mohammed Atiqur Rahman, Registrar Prof ABM Abdul Hannan and Proctor Prof Syed Mozaffar Ahmed were present on the occasion.

One-minute silence was observed on the occasion.

Earlier, national flag and university's flag were hoisted atop of the administrative building of the university at the dawn. Besides, special foods were provided among patients undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Under the initiative of the Islamic Foundation (IF), a doa and munajat was offered after Johr prayers marking the day at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque here.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) also observed the day with some programmes including hoisting of national flags at all units of the border force, offering doa and munajat, providing special foods among members of BGB in lunch. Besides, BGB Headquarters at Pilkhana and key buildings were illuminated.

Besides, the Independence Day was observed in different Bangladesh missions abroad and district and upazila levels across the country in a limited scale.

The day was a public holiday.

National dailies published special supplements while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television, private radio stations and television channels aired special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

However, different political parties as well as socio-cultural and professional organisations also suspended all programmes to avoid public gathering and maintain social distancing following the directives of the government as well as the World Health Organization (WHO).

Every year, the March 26 brings the most tragic reminiscence of the history's blackest episode that heralded a nine-month bloody ordeal from the night of March 25, 1971, achieving the long-cherished independence on December 16 the same year at the cost of a sea of blood.

In the wake of the military crackdown, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who became the undisputed leader of the then Pakistan following the massive victory of his party, Awami League, in the 1970 general elections, declared the independence of Bangladesh through the then EPR (East Pakistan Rifles) wireless at 00-30 hours on March 26 (the night following March 25) in 1971 at his historic Road-32 residence at Dhanmondi here.

The great leader also called upon the people to build up strong resistance against the Pakistani barbaric occupation forces.

The Pakistani military junta, in a bid to stop the legitimate movement of the Bangalees, arrested Bangabandhu on that night following his declaration of independence.

Later, Bangabandhu was taken to the then West Pakistan where he had to spend nine months in a dark condemned cell.

Bangabandhu wrote down the declaration of independence soon after the Pakistani army cracked down on the fateful night of March 25, 1971.

The declaration of independence was soon put on air by wireless. The declaration was first broadcast by Awami League leader MA Hannan from Kalurghat Radio Station in port city of Chittagong on March 26, 1971.

However, on March 27, 1971, the then Major Ziaur Rahman announced the proclamation of independence on behalf of great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from the same radio station.

The Pakistani military junta in their monstrous outburst unleashed a bloody holocaust breaking the silence of the night following March 25 in 1971 when they mercilessly killed hundreds of innocent sleeping Bangalees, including teachers, students, police, soldiers, pedestrians and rickshaw-pullers, here.

The nation soon launched the War of Liberation at the call of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the early hours of March 26.

Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign country on December 16, 1971 with the surrender of the Pakistani occupation forces, who killed three million innocent civilians, perpetrated atrocities on two lakh Bangalee women and burnt down lakhs of houses across the country during the nine-month bloody war.