

A HISTORICAL DOCUMENT

Bangabandhu's March 7 Press Statement

The following press statement was issued by Bangabandhu on March 7, 1971 in response to Yahya Khan's radio speech on the previous day.

Between the 1st March when there was a sudden announcement of the postponement sine die of the sitting of the National Assembly and the 6th March, the people of Bangla Desh have seen subjected to military confrontation. There has been widespread firing upon unarmed civilians (workers, peasants and students) who had stood up to protest against the sudden and un-warranted postponement of the National Assembly. Those who have lost their lives during the last week are martyrs who died protecting the democratic rights of the people against the arbitrary and unwarranted action of postponement sine die the National Assembly. It is indeed a travesty of the truth to term these martyrs as "destructive elements" when in fact the real destructive elements are those who are responsible for unleashing a veritable reign of terror against the people of Bangla Desh. It is highly regrettable that the President has not been able to find time to come to Dacca to see the horrors perpetrated during the last week.

SEE PAGE J2

BANGABANDHU'S FINEST HOUR

MAHFUZ ANAM

It is now 49 years that I, along with millions of others, had that special opportunity to be a part of history by being personally present at the Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) on 7th March afternoon to hear, what turned out to be one of the most outstanding speeches in recent history.

I remember the day as if it were yesterday. I got up with inner excitement and rushed to the Dhaka University campus intuitively feeling that something momentous is going to happen today. Ever since Bangabandhu's non-cooperation movement was launched, it became our regular practice to gather around Dhaka University's Teachers Students Centre (TSC) and start a procession around 11 am that would do the rounds of the city and end at Shaheed Minar by afternoon. The purpose was to urge people to join the rally of the 7th, spreading the message of non-cooperation and raising awareness about the continuing and impending struggle.

On March 7, 1971, the procession returned comparatively early and we, fellow workers of Chhatra Union, the most prominent left-leaning student organisation of the day, gathered together at TSC and proceeded across the road and entered the meeting venue. We watched as people gathered and how endless processions of activists and the general public kept pouring in. Placards, posters and miniature "boats" (symbol of Awami League) were to be seen everywhere. We positioned ourselves quite a distance from the dais - places closer were filled up. Within minutes places farther away also got filled up and the gathering was increasing by the minute, so to speak.

The meeting atmosphere became electrified as Bangabandhu entered the ground and I could see from afar as he climbed to the stage with millions chanting slogans - engulfing the whole area.

Then history began to unfold.

Below I reprint what I had written 23 years ago.

It is this writer's view that the 7th March speech was Bangabandhu's finest hour.

SEE PAGE J2

PHOTO:
NASIR ALI MAMUN
/PHOTOSEUM

এই আঙুলের নির্দেশে
বিশ্বের মানচিত্রে
আমরা খুঁজে পাই একটি
নতুন দেশের ঠিকানা

১৯৭১-এর ৭ই মার্চ, বাঙালি প্রথম ডাক শোনে স্বাধীনতার।
রেসকোর্স ময়দান থেকে বঙ্গবন্ধুর উদাত্ত কণ্ঠের স্বাধীনতা ঘোষণায় জেগে উঠে
সারাদেশ। তাঁর আঙুলের ইশারায় আমরা সেদিনই প্রথমবারের মতো বিশ্বের মানচিত্রে
দেখতে পাই একটি স্বাধীন দেশের স্থান, এক নিরাপদ ভবিষ্যতের ঠিকানা।

আজ বঙ্গবন্ধু মানে একটি দেশের পতাকা, বঙ্গবন্ধু মানে
স্বাধীন-সার্বভৌম বাংলাদেশ। শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মশতবর্ষে শ্রদ্ধাভরে
স্মরণ করছি সেই দিনটিকে, আর বঙ্গবন্ধুকে।

 **বিএসআবএম**
নিরাপদ দেশ গড়ার অঙ্গীকার