



**PRESIDENT**  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH

**Message**

Today is 26 March, the Independence Day of Bangladesh. On the occasion of our great Independence and National Day, I extend my heartfelt greetings and warm felicitations to my fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

On this historic day, I remember with profound respect the architect of our independent Bangladesh, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I pay my deep homage to the millions of martyrs who made supreme sacrifice in the war of liberation. I also recall with deep reverence our four National Leaders, valiant freedom-fighters, organizers, supporters, our foreign friends and people from all walks of life who made immense contributions to attain our right to self-determination and the war of liberation. Their contributions to the history of our independence would be written in golden letters forever.

We have achieved our hard-earned independence through huge sacrifices. Bangabandhu always cherished a dream of building a happy and prosperous country along with attaining political emancipation. Keeping that in mind, the present Government has been rendering untiring efforts in materializing the dream of Bangabandhu. Today, Bangladesh is moving towards the highway of development at a tremendous pace. We have achieved enormous success in various areas of socio-economic development including poverty alleviation, education, health, human resources development, women empowerment, reduction of child and maternal mortality rates, elimination of gender discrimination and increase in average life expectancy. Rate of poverty has been dropped. High growth of GDP is continuing. Per capita income has tripled over the past decade. The construction of the Padma Bridge is also going on in full swing by our own resources. The Ruppur Nuclear Power Plant is underway. Bangladesh has been able to surpass herself not only the neighbouring countries of South Asia but also many developed countries in terms of various indicators of socio-economic development. We are dreaming of a developed Bangladesh by the year 2041. Initiative has been taken up to frame the 'Second Perspective Plan' spanning from 2021 to 2041 in this regard. The Delta Plan 2100 has been formulated in order to achieve the status of a prosperous and developed country combating the long-term challenges for sustainable water, climate, environment and land system. With the continuation of development process, Bangladesh will raise its position high in the world as a prosperous country by 2041, insha Allah.

In pursuing our diplomatic objectives, the government has been consistent in upholding the principle of "Friendship to all, malice towards none" as enunciated by Father of the Nation. Our achievement in the international arena, including the establishment of world peace, is also commendable. Our expatriate Bangladeshis have also been making significant contributions to our national economy by sending their hard-earned remittances. Nevertheless, we have to go a long way towards achieving the desired goal of independence. We must ensure good governance, social justice, transparency and accountability to make the development people-oriented and sustainable. Forbearance, human rights and rule of law have to be consolidated for institutionalizing democracy. National Parliament will have to make as the centre of hopes and aspirations of the people. For this, the ruling party as well as the opposition would have to play a constructive role in the parliament.

Bangabandhu is the source of eternal inspiration for the Bangali nation. This year, the government has declared 'Mujib Year' to celebrate the birth centenary of Bangabandhu in a befitting manner. Being imbued with the spirit of the liberation war let it be the pledge in 'Mujib Year' to turn our country into 'Sonar Bangla' by completing the unfinished tasks of Bangabandhu. The golden jubilee of our independence will be observed in 2021 with great enthusiasm. Bangladesh will enter into a new chapter-a new horizon. With the concerted efforts of all, let our beloved motherland be a poverty-free developed one; it is my expectation on Independence Day.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

  
**Md. Abdul Hamid**

**The Legacy of Bangladesh's Struggle for Economic Freedom**

**Dr. Atiur Rahman**


Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave a clarion call for economic freedom in his historic speech of 7 March 1971. This call embraced social, economic and political freedom. The whole nation started a non-cooperation movement at his call. After nine months of bloody struggle during which he was in jail in West Pakistan, Bangabandhu finally took the reins of the newly independent Bangladesh in January 1972. He immediately assured his countrymen that he would take every step necessary to achieve his dream of "Sonar Bangla," or "Golden Bengal," with his people's support.

He pulled a newborn country from ashes to the path of prosperity, relying on the fighting spirit and big dreams of his people. This was an unprecedented journey of transformation that overcame many challenges. Many international observers said that Bangladesh was going through a Malthusian paradigm with so many people and so little resources. The US State Department trashed Bangladesh as an 'International Basket Case' in late 1971 and others thought that Bangladesh was an ideal 'Test Case of Development'. Defying all odds, Bangladesh moved on, keeping its head high under the strong leadership of Bangabandhu. He presented a rights-based constitution within only eight months of liberation. This was followed by the First Five Year Plan, which was prepared within a year and half to "provide a sense of direction and determine the order of priorities within the framework of which coherent and consistent policies and programs could be formulated" (Bangabandhu, 'Foreword' to the First Five Year Plan). "Social transformation consistent with our political objectives has been foremost in our mind," said Professor Nurul Islam, the then Deputy Chair of the Planning commission, in the 'Preface' to the Plan document.

Indeed, this was a socio-economic transformational plan. Bangabandhu's visionary economic development strategy had three elements. Firstly, it pursued self-reliance utilizing national resources as efficiently as possible. Secondly, it welcomed foreign aid conditionally in priority sectors initially and pledged to reduce its share subsequently. Thirdly, as Pakistani entrepreneurs left Bangladesh, it implemented a mixed economy initially state-led for obvious reasons to ensure social justice, but quickly complemented it with the potential private sector investment. The 1974-75 budget raised the private investment ceiling from USD 2.5 million to Taka 30 million to promote small and medium enterprises. The budget also allowed deregulation of 133 earlier nationalized enterprises. Despite a number of challenges, the economy of Bangladesh was making speedy progress under the leadership of Bangabandhu. This became clear from the rise of per capita income from USD 93 in 1972 to USD 272 in 1975. On the contrary, in the absence of Bangabandhu the per capita income plummeted to USD 138 in 1976 and even lower at USD 128 in the following year. As evidenced during the Asian Financial crisis in the 1990s, his emphasis on small and medium enterprises and agriculture proved to be a successful strategy of macro-economic stability and social cohesion.

Bangladesh certainly lost its way in the absence of Bangabandhu. Thanks to his able daughter Sheikh Hasina who took charge of Bangladesh after twenty-one years of

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**PRIME MINISTER**  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

**Message**

I extend my heartiest greetings to the countrymen and expatriate Bangladeshis on the occasion of the great Independence and National Day of Bangladesh.

The 26 March is the day of establishing self-identity of our nation. It's the day of breaking the shackles of subjugation. On this Independence Day, I recall with deep gratitude the Greatest Bangalee of all times. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose undisputed leadership we have earned our coveted independence. I pay my tributes to four national leaders who steered the War of Liberation in the absence of Bangabandhu. I also pay my deep homage to the three million martyrs and two lakhs dishonored women of the War of Liberation. My homage goes to all the valiant freedom fighters including the wounded ones. I extend my sympathies to those who had lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture during the Liberation War. I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their whole-hearted support and cooperation for the cause of our liberation.

Marking the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation 'Mujib Year' is being celebrated from March 2020 to March 2021. Bangabandhu's birth centenary celebration has been started on 17 March. Along with Bangladesh, Mujib Year is being celebrated globally with the initiative of the UNESCO.

The Bangalee nation had fought against oppression and deprivation of Pakistani rulers' for long 23 years under the leadership of Bangabandhu. They were compelled to hold General Elections in 1970. Bangladesh Awami League led by Bangabandhu won absolute majority in the elections. But the Pakistani rulers adopted repressive measures instead of handing over power to the majority party in a democratic way. Calling for independence at the then RecceCourse Ground on 7 March 1971 Bangabandhu declared: "The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation; the struggle this time is the struggle for independence, Joi Bangla." He instructed the Bangalee Nation to resist the enemies.


The Pakistani occupation forces unleashed a sudden attack and started killing innocent and unarmed Bangladeshis on the fateful night of 25 March 1971. They killed thousands of people in cities and towns including Dhaka. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman formally proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of 26 March 1971. Bangabandhu's proclamation was spread all over the country through telegrams, tele-printers and EPR wireless. The international media also had circulated Bangabandhu's proclamation of Independence. Under the brave and dauntless leadership of Bangabandhu, the ultimate victory was attained on 16 December 1971 after a 9-month of bloody war.

The independence earned through supreme sacrifices of millions of people is the greatest achievement of Bangalee Nation. To ensure that this achievement remains meaningful, all have to know the true history of our great Liberation War and retain the spirit of independence. The spirit of the Liberation War has to be passed on from generation to generations.

Being imbued with the spirit of the freedom struggle, the Awami League government has relentlessly been working to develop the country since 2009. We have been accomplishing the unfinished tasks of the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh had achieved outstanding socio-economic progress in the last 11 years. It has fulfilled the requirements for graduating from least developed country to developing one. Our government is maintaining 'zero tolerance' policy to tackle militancy, terrorism and drug-menaces. For the first time in the world, we have formulated a 100-year plan named 'Delta Plan 2100'. Bangladesh is one of the five top countries in the world in economic development. Ninety percent of development works are financed from our own resources. By establishing the rule of law, we have executed the verdicts of the trail of the killers of Bangabandhu. As per our pledges to the people the trials of war criminals are going on and verdicts are being executed. People are now getting benefits of development as Awami League has continuously been in power for third consecutive time. Bangladesh is moving forward and it will go on. Today we have become a self-respecting country in the world holding our heads high.

By implementing our 'Vision-2021', 'Vision-2041' and 'Delta Plan-2100', we have been working relentlessly to build a hunger-poverty-free developed-prosperous Bangladesh as envisioned by the Father of the Nation. Let us unite in the spirit of the Great War of Liberation and maintain the continuation of development and democracy by facing any sort of conspiracy. Let us transform Bangladesh into a safe and peaceful home for our next generation-this should be our firm commitment on the Independence Day.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

  
**Sheikh Hasina**

**26 March: The Day of Bangali's Freedom from Bondage**

**Anupam Sen**

Some days in the thousand year-old annals of the Bangla-speaking people shall remain forever luminous and a source of inspiration for all Bangalis. These days are 21 February, 7 March, 26 March and 16 December. The declaration of independence made by the greatest hero of the Bangalis for all ages Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 26 March assumed a complete shape on 16 December 1971.

The nationality of the Bangalis has coalesced over a few thousand years from races like the Austric, Mongoloid and Caucasoid. At one time, this nation-entirety became known as the Bangali race. Their habitat also came to be known as the land of Vanga. Bangla is the colloquial language of this nation-entirety. The Bangla language got its preliminary shape from the 'Donha' dialects one thousand years ago. During the thousand year history of the Bangla-speaking Badshahs, Sultans, land, sometimes as ordinary Bangalis subjects during independence, never became of an independent country first time following the victory of 16 December 1971.

Although there was freedom from the bondage of colonial rule in 1947, the Bangalis found that they were tied to a crueler colonial exploitation through the creation of Pakistan. This realization dawned on some people when they observed that the capital, central administration, and the centre of everything were located in West Pakistan despite the Bangalis making up 55 percent of Pakistan's population. The Bangalis viewed the attempt to take away their right of language as an even ruler slap. The Bangali professors and pundits like Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Dr. Qazi Motahar Husain and Dr. Md. Enamul Haque protested against this student-strike. As the East Bengal Provincial Assembly was in session at that juncture, the Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin released from jail the top leader of the 'Language Action Council' Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his



compatriots on 15 March through a kind of compromise. Later, the language movement achieved fruition through the shedding of blood by martyrs on 21 February 1952.

This political subjugation of the Bangalis became intensely apparent when the cabinet formed by the Jukto-Front could not last even two months after achieving a landslide victory against the Muslim League in the provincial assembly election of 1954. The first constitution of Pakistan was framed in 1956 following 9 long years of its existence. But before any election could be held based on that constitution, Iskandar Mirza declared martial law all over the country on 8 October 1958. Then the army-chief Ayub Khan seized power from him three weeks later. Through this military rule, planned subjection and exploitation of East Pakistan assumed an even crueler shape. Almost all political leaders of East Pakistan were put behind bars. Among them, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the first to be arrested.

The rule of Ayub Khan lasted for over one decade (October 1958 - March 1969). However, with the exception of some opportunistic individuals, the Bangali people of East Pakistan started to get organized much earlier against this colonial exploitation imposed by the military-civil oligarchy and bureaucracy of Pakistan through the establishment of Awami Muslim League on 23 June 1949.

The people of East Pakistan not only faced cultural and political oppression during the period 1947 to 1968, but also their economic exploitation reached an alarming level. About 60 percent of Pakistan's annual export receipts, sometimes even 70 percent came from East Pakistan. But the province did not get any benefit from this income. Rather, those were passed on to West Pakistan. The average annual imports of East Pakistan on the other hand remained confined within 30 percent of Pakistan. The huge deficits in foreign trade that piled up over these two decades were met through the trade surplus of East Pakistan. This trade surplus was used in turn for massive industrialisation of West Pakistan. Besides, it was utilised for generating power, building roads and other physical infrastructures there.

It may be recalled that after the creation of the Pakistan state, annual output (GDP) of East Pakistan was 1237 crore rupee, whereas that of West Pakistan was 1209.10 crore rupee during 1949-50. These figures for the two provinces rose to 2271.30 crore rupee and 3156.30 crore rupee respectively in 1969-70. Their per capita income became 321 rupee and 546 rupee respectively at that juncture. Although the amounts may appear to be small in terms of present value of currencies, in reality they were quite big. This disparity between the two regions was created through transfer of incomes and assets of East Pakistan to West Pakistan by various ways and means. There was also a huge disparity in public cum private investments. Although the population of East Pakistan was much higher than West Pakistan, an amount of only 4,340 crore rupee was spent for East Pakistan in different sectors of Pakistan during the period 1950-70 covering the preliminary plan and three 5-year plans, whereas the amount spent in West Pakistan was 11,534 crore rupee during the period.

When the deprivations imposed on the people of East Pakistan became clearer, we saw the presence of Bangalis or East Pakistanis to be quite negligible in the massive defence forces structure built during the first 23 years of Pakistan's existence. The headquarters of all the forces of Pakistan were in West Pakistan. About 95 percent of the Generals, Lt. Generals, Major Generals, Brigadiers, Colonels, Lt. Colonels, Majors, Captains etc. hailed from West Pakistan. There were only one Brigadier, one Colonel, one Lt. Colonel and a few Majors from among the Bangalis. Similar discriminations were also observed in the Navy and Air Force. Not only in the military bureaucracy, the civil bureaucracy at the centre was also tainted by this discrimination.

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**Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Initiative on Humanitarian Service in International Arena Leading to Future Journey of Bangladesh in This Field**

**Lt. Col. (Retd.) Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir Bir Protik, Independence Award Recipient**

I recall with reverence the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the auspicious occasion of his birth centenary. Deprived of their rights, the repressed Bangalis could emerge victorious against the powerful Pakistani military force because of the foresight, love for his people, intellect and mindset of this great leader. He had tremendous sympathy and affection for the suffering masses in different regions of the globe. Consequently, he took such a timely humanitarian decision in October 1973 for human welfare by means of which the door to the infinite potentials of Bangladesh was opened up on the global stage.

The joining and contributions of Bangladesh to the United Nations Peacekeeping Missions have been a matter of pride for us. The armed forces of Bangladesh have been running this program for many years. The Bangladesh Armed Forces and Bangladesh Police have remained actively involved in UN Peacekeeping Operations since 1988. The armed forces of Bangladesh have helped in creating a bright image for Bangladesh in the international arena by accomplishing their tasks during disasters both at home and abroad through demonstrating humanism, efficiency and untiring efforts. Notable among the peacekeeping missions were: Reconstruction of Kuwait (OKP or Operation Kuwait Punargathan) in 1990; Operation SAARC Bandhan following Tsunami in Sri Lanka and Maldives in 2004; the mission following the cyclone 'Nargis' in Myanmar in 2008; and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. Besides, the armed forces, the police and civilian staffs have made significant contributions by participating in numerous UN Peacekeeping Missions, such as: UNIMOG, UNGOMAP, UNTAG, MINARSO, UNIKOM, UNGCI, UNAMIC, UNPROFOR, UNTAC, UNOSOM, UNIMOG etc.

The Arab-Israeli War had commenced on Saturday, 6 October 1973 at 2 pm immediately after mid-day. This war is also known as the 1973 Arab-Israel War, the Ramadan War, etc. The war lasted until 25 October. Bangabandhu was always concerned about the repressed people of the world. As he was keen about helping them, he promptly extended support to the Arab countries in their just war. It was not confined to mere moral support; a decision was taken to send a team of military

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