



Special Supplement

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Message


 PRESIDENT
 PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
 BANGLADESH

December 16th is our great Victory Day. On this day in 1971, we achieved our long-cherished victory after a long struggle and bloodshed war. On the eve of the joyous victory day, I extend my sincere felicitations and warm greetings to my fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

In the history of eternity, Independence is the greatest achievement of the Bangladeshi nation. It enabled us to achieve a sovereign country, independent nationhood, a sacred constitution, own map and a red-green flag. However, it was not too easy to attain in a day. Behind the achievement, there was a prolonged history of deprivation, sanguinary struggle and supreme sacrifice of our people. The seeds of independence that was sown in the Language Movement in 1952 subsequently came into being on 26 March in 1971 through the proclamation of Independence by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, overcoming various ups and downs and staging long movement and agitation. The final victory was achieved through a nine-month long war of liberation against Pakistani invading forces under Bangabandhu's leadership and guidance on 16 December in 1971.

Today, I recall with profound respect Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest Bangladeshi of all time. I pay my deep homage to the valiant freedom fighters who made supreme sacrifice in the war of liberation for the cause of country's independence. I remember with gratitude the four national leaders who led the government during the war of liberation on behalf of Bangabandhu. I also pay my respect to the people of all walks of life, including the heroic freedom fighters, the organisers and supporters of the liberation war, foreign friends, war-wounded individuals and members of the martyrs' families, who directly and indirectly contributed to our victory. The nation recalls their contributions with utmost respect.

The aims of our independence were to attain political sovereignty as well as people's economic emancipation. Returning to the newly independent country after being freed from Pakistan's prison, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu started his journey for achieving economic self-sufficiency by rebuilding economy and infrastructure of the war-ravaged country, keeping the aims of independence in mind. He called for an agricultural revolution and launched a movement against corruption, black marketeers, profiteers and looters. But the progress of country's democracy and development came to a halt after the brutal assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his near and dear ones being committed by a group of anti-liberation forces on August 15, 1975. Subsequently, the autocratic and undemocratic government was emerged.

Overcoming various ups and downs, now a democratic government has been established in the country. With the spirit and values of our liberation war and independence, the Government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken 'Vision 2021', 'Vision 2041' and hundred-year long 'Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100' to materialise the unfinished tasks of Bangabandhu. The objectives of these plans are to attain the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and to turn Bangladesh into a developed and prosperous country by 2041 respectively. Despite various adversities, sustained economic growth in recent years is continuing due to manifold public welfare-oriented programmes being implemented by the government. Country is advancing in every socio-economic index, including health, education, women's empowerment, etc. The per capita income and average life expectancy of our people has also increased. Bangladesh, in the meantime, has been recognised as a developing country from a least developed country.

The construction work of the Padma Bridge, which is being constructed by our own resources, is about to completion. Besides, some mega projects like Metro Rail, Payra Sea Port, Karnaphuli Multipurpose Tunnel, Elevated Expressway, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant are being implemented. Bangladesh is now a proud member of the elite satellite club through launching the Bangabandhu-1 Satellite into space. All-out cooperation as well as a positive change of outlook of our people is imperative to take this ongoing development trend forward.

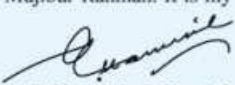
Our foreign policy is being exercised in accordance with the principle of "Friendship to all, malice towards none" as enunciated by Father of the Nation. Bangladesh believes in world peace and harmony. Bangladesh has set a unique example of humanity in international arena by providing shelter to millions of forcibly displaced and tortured Rohingyas fled from Myanmar. We believe in a peaceful resolution of the crisis. I urge the UN and the international community including Myanmar to take immediate effective measures to settle the problem permanently. Our expatriate Bangladeshis are making a significant contribution to the national economy by sending their hard-earned remittances to the country. The nation acknowledges their contribution with gratitude.

The global epidemic COVID-19 has put human civilization to the brink of one of the worst disasters in history. Everyday thousands of people are adding to the procession of death and being infected. The economy of the whole world has collapsed; billions of people have become unemployed. Bangladesh is no exception. Bangladesh is successfully coping with the Corona situation, due to the 31-point directives and the timely decision given by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and tireless efforts of all concerned to deal with this unexpected situation. To win the Corona War, I call upon the people to follow health guidelines properly.

The whole nation is celebrating 'Mujib Year 2020', the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in a befitting manner this year. The Golden Jubilee celebration of our independence will be observed in 2021. Observing the two magnificent and landmark events with the participation of all, irrespective of party affiliation, I believe, will add a new dimension to the history of Bangladeshi. We shall have to give institutional shape to democracy and the political parties will have to nurture the culture of mutual respect and of tolerance of others' opinion in order to deliver the benefits of independence at people's doorstep, which attained through the sacrifice of millions of martyrs. Let us contribute more from our respective position in implementing the spirit and values of war of liberation and take the nation towards the path of development and prosperity. Let our country turn into 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal) as dreamt of by our Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It is my expectation on the great Victory Day.

Joi Bangla.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.


 Md. Abdul Hamid

Dream of Victory Day in the Mujib-Year

Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

If those who had witnessed 1971 are asked what their most joyous moment in life was, then they would certainly answer '16 December 1971'. In my view, those who had witnessed 1971 with their own eyes are the most fortunate people in the whole world. That was because, they had seen with their own eyes what great sacrifices the ordinary people of this land made by imperilling their own lives during the most terrible episode in life, and how they could give away their lives by loving the country so dearly. Above all, they could observe how the biggest achievement of this country was brought about. If they were not fortunate, then who else were? Again, looking at it from another angle, they might have been another band of unlucky people, because they had witnessed one of the cruelest genocides in world history with their own eyes. Also, it would not have been surprising if they had lost faith in the entire mankind after seeing such brutality of the Pakistani military and their feet-licking adherents.

Luckily, that was not how things happened. The memory of terror ultimately got covered by the recollection of joy with the soft touch of time; the intensity of sorrow has crystallised within the confines of tolerance; people have learned to dream about a fresh life anew. Therefore, it can be said with certainty that those who had seen 1971 not only became witnesses of history, they had at the same time observed humanity that can never be forgotten. A fundamental transformation has occurred in those people who had witnessed that episode. At the same time, they can remain in an unwavering situation as they had witnessed the terrible period. They can dream about the future, and remain optimistic. Therefore, I consider myself most fortunate one.

Even after half a century later, I can clearly recall those days close to the Victory Day in 1971. We could realize in the besieged city of Dhaka from the start of December that the nature of war had undergone a change. It was going to end, but none could say how much additional blood would have been shed. Dog-fights of war-planes could be seen from the rooftops of houses. The night-sky was lit by the synchronous firings from anti-aircraft guns, and places all around trembled due to the harsh sound. Military convoys were passing nearby; the stern-looking Pakistani troops were sitting atop those vehicles with stony faces. Those who were living on the borders of Dhaka could see the passing of tanks moving over the pitch-laden roads with groaning sound. There were also the roars of cannons and uninterrupted shelling. The BBC reported that the US Seventh Fleet was advancing towards Bangladesh over the Bay of Bengal with hundreds of fighter jets. Then announcements could be heard after tuning in to the local radio, which urged the Pakistani military to surrender: "Drop the weapons, surrender the arms". Leaflets were thrown from the sky, relentlessly calling for surrender. We were realizing that a war was not merely exchange of fire; it also exerted tremendous mental pressure. We did not know even then that the Al-Badr forces – the students' front of Jamaate Islami – had started to kill the illustrious offspring of this land one after another.

It was the month of December. The weather was very cold. There were some small children at the place where I had taken refuge. We held our breath while we were waiting inside a bunker covered by blankets. There was acute uncertainty. We did not know what would happen and how things would turn out. Suddenly, at that very juncture, we heard somebody shout in an intensely razor-sharp voice, 'Joy Bangla'. All uncertainties were gone in a moment. All worries evaporated. Nobody told us, but we understood that the day for which we had been waiting had arrived. The days we passed running to nooks and crannies of the country like wild beasts were over. The country for which so many of our near ones had shed blood from their bosom has now materialised. What could be more fruitful than this? But what a surprise! There were tears in the corners of our eyes when we got that news for the first time.

I cannot believe even now that this slogan 'Joy Bangla' was in exile in this country for a long time. The country was born with innumerable dreams. We dreamt about a new life on that Victory Day. Although the land was rid of enemies, Bangabandhu was still in a Pakistani prison. He returned on 10 January, and we were greatly elated! He put in his efforts for building a Bangladesh of our dreams. At that time, there were lakhs of homeless and uprooted people in the country. There were families without fathers, mothers who had lost their sons, tortured daughters, disabled freedom fighters, and people living in abject poverty. Many of them did not have houses or homes for taking shelter. Many did not have anything to eat. The roads, ports and bridges of the country were destroyed. Many schools and colleges were non-existent as they were turned into military camps by the Pakistanis. Dwelling houses were burnt down; consequently the students did not have books or note-pads. The economy was shattered. But even then people had huge expectations. Surely, this country would stand up by raising its head high. All exploitations and deprivations would then be eliminated. There would be no injustice in this land, no irreligious practices. There would be bountiful love for all people irrespective of their religion or colour.

But Bangabandhu was not granted the required time for building up the country. Within three and a half years, Bangabandhu was assassinated along with his family members in the early hours of 15 August during one of the most gruesome killings in world history. The soil of this forsaken land was coloured by the blood of Bangabandhu. A modern Bangladesh lost her way at that very juncture by moving

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 PRIME MINISTER
 GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
 REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message



Today is 16 December, our Great Victory Day and National Day. This is one of the glorious days of the Bangalee Nation. Responding to the clarion call of the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Bangalee Nation earned ultimate victory on this day in 1971 after 23 years of intense political struggles and a nine-month bloody war against the Pakistani occupation forces. I extend my sincere greetings and warm felicitations to the countrymen marking the 50th Victory Day. I also express deep gratitude to those countries and persons who helped us by various means during our War of Liberation.

I pay deep homage to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, 3-million martyrs, 2-hundred thousand dishonored women and the bravest sons of the soil-our freedom fighters, for whose supreme sacrifices we have got an independent and sovereign Bangladesh.

The Bangalee nation started movement for independence through Language Movement of 1948-1952, Education Movement of 1962, 6-Point Demand of 1966, and 11-point Movement and Mass Uprising of 1969 under the undaunted leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib. The Awami League secured an absolute majority in the general elections of 1970. However, Pakistani Military Junta did not allow the Bangalee Nation to assume power. The Father of the Nation realized that the oppression, persecution and deprivation meted out to the Bangalee Nation would not be ended without achieving independence. Accordingly, on the historic 7 March of 1971, he in front of a million of people at the then Race Course Maidan firmly pronounced, "The struggle this time is the struggle for emancipation, the struggle this time is the struggle for independence." At the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, country-wide non-cooperation movement began. Preparation for waging armed struggle also continued.

On the fateful night of 25 March of 1971, the Pakistani occupation forces launched a brutal onslaught and committed genocide on the innocent and unarmed Bangalees. At the early hours of 26 March, Bangabandhu declared independence of Bangladesh. Formal War of Independence began. The first government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh formed with Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the President, Syed Nazrul Islam as the Vice-President and Tajuddin Ahmad as the Prime Minister was sworn-in on 17 April 1971 at the historic Mujibnagar and led the Liberation War. The valiant freedom fighters earned ultimate victory on 16 December 1971 by defeating Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators- Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Sham. We got our red-green flag.

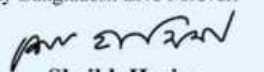
When Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib had engaged himself in rebuilding the war-ravaged Bangladesh, the anti-liberation war criminal cliques assassinated the Father of the Nation along with most of his family members on 15 August 1975. Through this heinous killing, they initiated the politics of killings, coup and conspiracy and blocked trial of Bangabandhu's killers through promulgating Indemnity Ordinance; thwarted democracy by declaring Martial Law; distorted the glorious history of Liberation War; destroyed its spirit; tailored the Constitution and restricted the freedom of the press. Later, the BNP-Jamat alliance government continued this trend.

Today's Bangladesh is a self-reliant Bangladesh. During 1996-2001 and the tenures of successive Awami League governments from 2009 to date, Bangladesh has made incredible socio-economic progress. Per capita income rose from US \$543 in 2005-06 to US \$2,085 now. Bangladesh has qualified to graduate to a developing country. We have made substantial progress in every field, including macroeconomics, agriculture, education, health, communications, information technology, infrastructure, power, rural economics and diplomacy. Various mega projects, including Padma Bridge, Metro Rail and Elevated Expressway are being implemented in road, rail, sea and air communication sector. With the launch of Bangabandhu Satellite-1, we have joined the list of Satellite technology savvy countries as the 57th nation in the world. Bangladesh today is one of the top five countries in the world in terms of economic progress; a country of 'Role model' of development. We have relentlessly been working to turn Bangladesh into a developed-prosperous country by 2041. We have started the implementation of the world's first 100-year 'Delta Plan 2100'.

Our government has adopted 'Zero Tolerance' policy to combat militancy, terrorism, repression on women and drugs menaces. We have established the rule of law in the country by executing the verdicts of the killers of the Father of the Nation. The verdicts of war criminals are being executed to rid the nation of stigma. We have peacefully resolved the land boundary issue with India. We have also peacefully resolved maritime boundaries with India and Myanmar. Bangladesh has been playing a commendable role in various international forums and in establishing world peace.

UNESCO has joined Bangladesh in celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation. Next year we will celebrate the golden jubilee of our Independence. Inspired by the spirit of the great War of Liberation, let us unite against all communal evil forces and thwart any conspiracy against the country, democracy and the government. In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, we must follow the health guidelines, and play our due role in maintaining the country's development, progress and continuity of democracy. May this be our firm pledge on this great Victory Day.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.


 Sheikh Hasina

the long nine months, they killed people, loaded them on trucks and carried away to Rayerbazar, Mirpur for dumping. The Biharis joined hands with the Pakistanis. A bamboo pierced youth was brought to Nababpur. They snatched kid from the mother's lap and threw in the air. Then they pointed the sword or spear at the kid and the kid got impaled.

Now it is about Chooknagar at Dumuriathana, Khulna. It was easy to enter India through Chooknagar. To save life, the people were then taking refuge in India crossing the border. Around 10 million people as refugees went to India.

It was 20 May. A great number of people rushed to Chooknagar to take shelter there. They were due to enter India through the market. The Indian government opened the border. Getting the news, the Pakistani soldiers went there. They killed 20 thousand people within four hours from 11 am to 3 pm. Chooknagar Bazar had turned into a death valley. The water of the nearby river got red with blood. A bleeding dead mother was among the thousands of corpses. Without realizing what happened, the survived infant was trying to suck the mother.....

Women of different ages were dragged to the Razarbagh Police Lines everyday. They were kept nude and continuously tortured. The whole environment was groaning with the screaming of the victim-women. The naked bodies of the women were kept hanging from the ceiling keeping heads low and legs high. So many women had died in that hanging conditions!

Vaghirathi, a young woman of 18 or 19. She was from Baghmara Kadamtala village of Pirojpur. A truck full of Pakistani military arrived at that village one afternoon in May. The whole village was burnt into ashes, and the villagers were killed indiscriminately. Vaghirathi was brought to the camp and brutally tortured for days. In course of time, Vaghirathi earned confidence of the beasts. Being expert at cooking, she served them with food. But fire of revenge was burning inside her. She secretly contacted with the freedom fighters. Inviting the beastly Pakistanis in their village, she made the freedom fighters kill 40 out of 45. Then Vaghirathi disappeared. She, however, had not been able to save herself. She was caught. Vaghirathi was made naked and tied with two jeeps side by side. Then the two legs and two hands of Vaghirathi were tied to the two jeeps which were driven to the opposite directions. Vaghirathi was torn apart like a paper.....

Thousands of Bangalis were brought to Pahartali in Chittagong and killed there. The Bangalis were killed getting down from the trains that moved from Pahartali to Hathazari. In that very spot, more than 10 thousand Bangalis were killed. On 20 Ramadan, hundreds of slaughtered dead bodies were found at Foy's Lake. At the

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Bangabandhu's Independent Bangladesh

Imdadul Haq Milan

Holding a long-thin bamboo pole with the flag of Bangladesh on top, a boy was running across the green field. The flag, shinning in the afternoon sunlight, was waving keeping rhythm with the race of the boy. With the utmost excitement, the boy was exclaiming at the top of his voice, "Bangladesh is independent. Bangabandhu's Bangladesh is independent. Joy Bangla. Joy Bangabandhu."

This was an incident of 15 December, 1971. A rural open ground in Bikrampur. A huge regions of Bangladesh had already been freed from the enemy ahead of 16 December. The Pakistani military suffered severe onslaught by the freedom fighters. Thousands of the Pakistani soldiers were killed and many more injured. Those who escaped somehow fled to Dhaka. Same had been the fate of Razakars, Al-badars and Al-shams. Many were captured by the freedom fighters while many went into hiding. Those who were captured could realize how to pay for the torture unleashed on the Bangalis during the nine months.

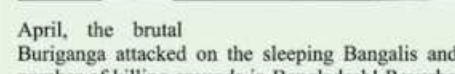
The surrounding area of the field the boy was running through became enemy free. The sun was setting on the other side of the field. Only one night! That very auspicious moment was knocking. The Niazi forces would surrender in that very Race Course Maidan from where Bangabandhu delivered his historic 7 March Speech in which he proclaimed, "The struggle this time is a struggle for freedom - the struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation." That very Race Course Maidan would witness the emergence of Bangabandhu's independent and sovereign Bangladesh. The sun of independence would rise in the sky of Bangla tomorrow. At that magnificent moment, the bereaved Bangalis would recall the nine month long agonies. So many savageries! Innumerable sacrifices, chastity of women and blood had to be paid for this Bangla - all would be recollectred.

The Pakistanis launched mass killing in the name of 'Operation Searchlight' on the fateful night of 25 March. They divided Dhaka in to four zones and pounced. On that night, they brought the students of Iqbal Hall and Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University together. They compelled the students to dig a huge grave in front of the Jagannath Hall then killed and buried them all. They killed the university teachers and the ordinary employees. Near-by slums were put on fire, shahedminar was demolished. Dhaka city became a hell. Fire and fire all around. Only sounds were of bullets and cannons.

The Bangali police raised resistance at the Razarbagh Police Lines. A huge number of Bangali policemen were killed. Same had been the fate of EPR Jawans. All those who were waiting for launches to board on in the evening at Saderghat Terminal were killed. Corpses were everywhere. Black pitch roads were blood stained. Dead bodies were piled up near the Jagannath College Gate, Narayanganj Bus Stand. In some places, fire continued till the following morning.

Curfew was relaxed for two hours on 27 March. In the meantime, the people of Dhaka crossing the Buriganga took shelter in Jinjira, Keraniganj areas. During the Fazi time on 2 April, the brutal Pakistanis crossing the Buriganga attacked on the sleeping Bangalis and killed thousands. What a huge number of killing grounds in Bangladesh! Rayerbazar and Mirpur in Dhaka. During




 Imdadul Haq Milan