

**"You cherished Independence  
you realised total freedom"**

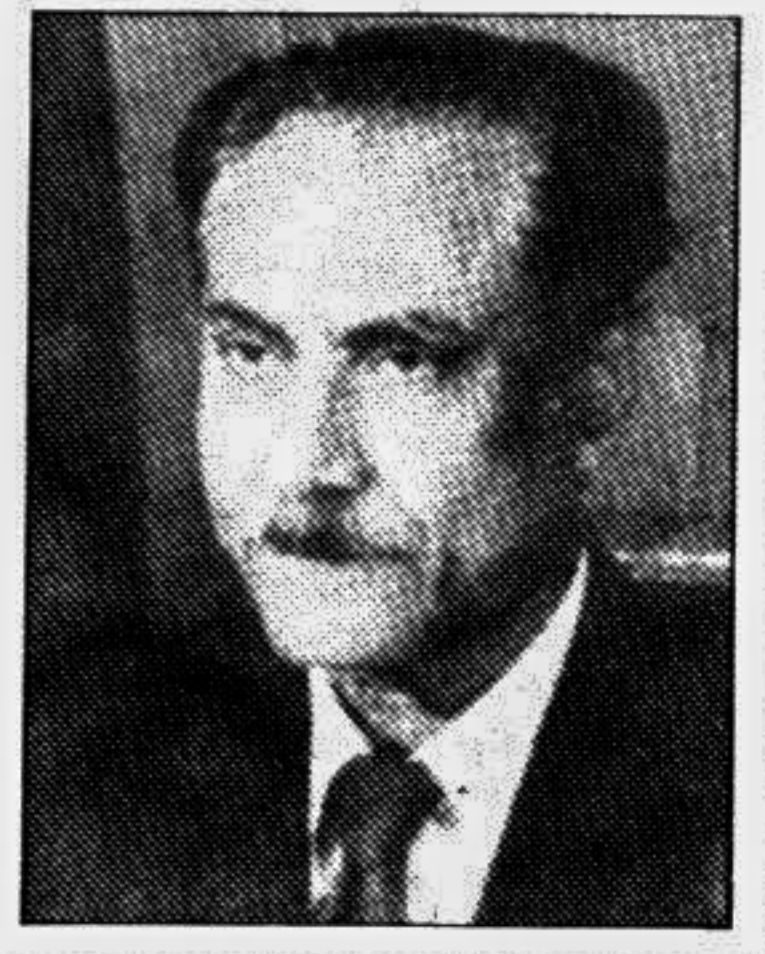


Tributes to Father of the Nation  
**Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**  
on his **78<sup>th</sup>**  
**Birth Anniversary**

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PRESIDENT  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
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17 March 1998

**Message**

I pay my respect to the unfaded memory of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at his 78th birthday.

The eventful life of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his prudence and discreteness and immense love for the people of the country are memorable. His indomitable leadership in establishing the rights of the common people and for achieving the country's freedom are praiseworthy. He came in contact with the leading politicians of the Sub-continent and participated actively in the Pakistan movement. But after the establishment of Pakistan, he became vocal against the undemocratic activities, use of religion in state activities and vested interests of the then ruling class and thereby started a strong movement towards materialising the hopes and aspirations of the Bangalee Nation and flourishing of their independent entity. His successful leadership in the mass upsurge of 1969 including the six point movement is radiant in our national history. As a successful moulder of Bangalee Nationalism, he got full support of the people in every movement of the country. He was always vocal in the realisation of the people's demands and for this reason he had to face imprisonment many times.

The emergence of Bangladesh as an independent and a sovereign country is a glorious chapter of the contemporary history and Bangabandhu is a successful personality of that chapter.

*Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed*

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed

**Sheikh Mujib, my Father**

Sheikh Hasina

Tungipara is a picturesque village on the Balgar river. The meandering Balgar river unites with the Modhumoti river. Balgar is one of the innumerable tributaries of the Modhumoti. On its two banks there is lush green groves of fan palms, tamal and hijal. Boatmen sing Bhattal songs which can be heard from the village. The chirp of birds and warble of the flowing river unite to create a wonderful and pleasant environment.

About two hundred years back the Modhumoti used to flow by the village. The human habitation grew on its banks. By the peremptory law of nature the river shifted away from the village. New habitats grew on the newly emerged sand banks. At that time, two centuries ago, my forefathers came to this area to preach Islam and settled in this beautiful hamlet awash with the river. Their trading was based on Calcutta port. They began to till the barren land and built up the village as a self-reliant and prosperous one by uniting the peasants of the village. At first the boat was the only means of communication. Later, Gopalganj thana developed into a steamer station. My ancestors bought lands at Tungipara and hired artisans and masons from Calcutta to built houses which was com-

pleted in 1854. Relics of those brick walls may still be found there to serve as the witness of history. In 1971 the Pakistan Army burnt down the last couple of those brick-built houses which were being inhabited till that time. Since building of those houses the descendants of our forefathers had multiplied over the years and new settlements proliferated around. My great grandfather Sheikh Abdul Hamid built his four-roofed tin house at the north-eastern corner of the main building. My grandfather Sheikh Lutfar Rahman raised his family in that house. On 17 March 1920 my father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born in that house. The name of my father's maternal grandfather was Sheikh Abdul Majid. He named his great grandson Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the time of the latter's 'Akika' (A religious rite through which a newborn is

son that would be famous all over the world".

My father spent his childhood diving and swimming in the river, smearing the dust of rural dirt-roads, and soaking in the mud-water of the monsoon. He saw with his keen eyes how the weaver-bird built its nest, how the kingfisher dipped in water to catch fish and where the magpie Robin nested. The pleasant tune of the magpie Robin attracted him intensely. That is why he enjoyed roaming through the meadows and bushes of the village along with other youngsters of the village. This was one way how he could mingle himself with nature. He would catch

chicks of shalik and Maina and train those how to talk and whistle. He had his pet monkeys and dogs who would follow whatever command he would give them. He would give the

whole family. His hardship was as if everyone's hardship. He was taken away from the school and was admitted into Gopalganj Missionary School. Gopalganj was my grandfather's working place. He continued with his studies at Gopalganj. Once my grandfather was transferred to Madaripur and my father studied there for some time. Later they came back to Gopalganj again and my father spent the rest of his childhood at Gopalganj.

My father did not have good physical health. That kept my grandmother always busy to make sure how she could keep her 'Khoka' healthy. My grandpa and grandma called my father Khoka. To his siblings and others in the village he was known as Mia Bhal. He could very easily mix with the simple and ordinary people of the village. My grandma was always eager to keep her Khoka healthy. She would prepare milk, posset and butter at home. Fruits from the garden and fresh fish from the river were always kept ready for him. But my father had always been tall and thin, and that kept my grandma always regretting as to why her son did not grow healthy and plump. He liked eating ordinary rice, fish froth and vegetables. He enjoyed eating rice mixed with milk, banana and molasses at the end of his meal. I had four 'fupu's' (paternal aunts) and one 'Chacha' (paternal uncle). Of the four sisters two were older than him. These two sisters used to remain busy all the time to make their younger brother comfortable. Although others were younger to him 'Khoka' attracted most of the grandparent's affection. The number of dependents on our family was also big. My grandparents kept with them the children of their sisters, especially those who had been orphaned. In all seventeen or eighteen boys and girls grew up together in their family.

At the age of ten, my father was married to my mother. She was only three years at that time. After she had lost her father her grandfather gave her to marriage and on that occasion gave away all his property to my mother and my aunt. My aunt was three to four years older than my mother. She gave her two daughters to marriage to her kins and made my grandfather their guardian. When she was six or seven years old my mother lost her mother. My Grandma took my mother into her lap. Since then she began to grow up along with her children.

My father showed strong inclination to games and sports alongside his studies. He had a special liking for football. He used to go to Chitalmari and Mollarhat across the Modhumoti to play football. Gopalganj School had a football team. My grandpa also liked to play games. Sometimes he would go to see my father's play. My grandpa while telling us stories of those games would say, "Your father was so weak that he used to roll on the ground after kicking the ball very hard". If my father



responsibility of looking after them to his younger sister Helen. He could not stand any negligence towards these pets. At times he used to scold the young sister for not taking enough care of his pets. A narrow canal passes through the south-west of our home. This canal joins the Modhumoti and the Balgar river. Our large outer-house used to be there on the bank of the canal. There was another house beside the big one where lodged the Teacher, Pandit and Mouli Sahib. They were appointed as house tutors. My father learnt Arabic, Bangla, English and Arithmetic from them.

Our forefathers built the Gimadanga Tungipara School. At that time it was a primary school. It was nearly one and a quarter kilometer from our home. He had his initial education in that school. Once during the monsoon the boat carrying him back home capsized. My father fell in the canal. Since that incident my grandmother did not allow him to go to that school. He was a tiny tod, apple of his mother's eye and the beloved of the

**Our Bangabandhu, Our Moments in History**

There are a thousand and one reasons why we remember Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He was our Bangabandhu, he was the Father of our nation. He was this country's Prime Minister; and he was President of the Republic when he died. He was all these, and yet he was a good deal more. You and I recall Bangabandhu basically for the man he was in our lives. If you travel back to the traumatic days of the war against the occupation forces of Pakistan in 1971, you cause a flurry in your soul, by the sheer act of recreating the times when a whole nation prayed for his safety. As we fought in the fields and the bushes, as we died in the alleys and in the cantonments, we told ourselves, over and over again, that the cause we were living for, the principle we were dying for, was fundamentally what Bangabandhu had armed us with. He had, in the five brief years between 1966 and 1971, instilled in us the courage to be ourselves. For the first time in our recorded history, we were made conscious of the energy that defined our political ambitions. Indeed, in Bangabandhu we rediscovered ourselves. He was the icon we had been waiting for. And when he arrived, in one of those wonderful moments when history refused to be captive to human caprices, we rejoiced. We had found our voice. It is a mightily cheering sight when a nation finds utterance.

Syed Badrul Ahsan

Go over, if you will, the course of his political life. The chance that you will stumble upon mistakes, upon blunders, is remote. At a time when so many of his contemporaries were only too willing to go for political accommodation in the interest of pure survival, Mujib preferred to take the forces of repression head on. His principles, you see, were palpable. He was one of those few men who comprehended the truth that in the politics of Pakistan, political strength was a derivative of unflinching devotion to the political cause. Politics, Bangabandhu constantly and insistently believed, was the one edifying means through which the people could be made to matter. No, he was no revolutionary. Radicalism was anath-

ema to him. His entry into politics as a young man, under the tutelage of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, came with the acceptance of the tradition of constitutionalism. In an entire career of political activism, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman never wavered from the thought that in the ultimate analysis, an adherence to orderly, constitutional means of politics mattered. It is in that light that the Six Points Programme for regional autonomy needs to be assessed. Bangabandhu, by 1966, had convinced himself that the future of Bangalis within the communistic dispensation of Pakistan was preordained. Stated simply, it was dark. Even so, he was not ready, at that point in time, to give notice to the Pakistani authorities. He was perfectly willing to bide his time. Deep inside

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Bangabandhu with his family members. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is seen on extreme right.



PRIME MINISTER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

12 March 1998

**Message**

With the passage of time, 17th March has reappeared before us. The greatest son of Bengal, the Architect of free and sovereign Bangladesh, our Great Leader Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was born on this day in 1920. The nation this year celebrates the 78th birthday of the Great Leader. As in the previous years, the day is being observed at state level with due respect.

The bold, profound and farsighted leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is an ever glowing history in the struggle for achieving a free and independent nationhood for the Bengalees. In fact, Bangladesh, the Bengalees and the Bangabandhu have become one and inseparable entity in the history. None can separate one from the others. That the people of linguistic group in the Ganges Delta will turn into a nation and this nation in turn will establish itself as free and sovereign nation before the world community through a bloody War of Liberation, and that the Bengali Language will get the status of state and national language of a sovereign state—all these turned into reality due to the unparalleled and epoch making leadership of Sheikh Mujib. Right from his student life until his martyrdom, he gave leadership to the oppressed and neglected people of this country. For the emancipation of the masses, the Great Leader left behind an ideology that still gives us inspiration and courage in our national life. The immortal leadership of the Great Leader remains as ever glowing beacon in the road to prosperity for the Bengalees and Bangladesh.

With the martyrdom of the Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the fateful night of August 15, 1975; evil attempts were made to turn the country into neo-Pakistan. Intrigues continued for 21 years to wipe out all that we achieved through the great war of liberation. The very spirit of Bengalee Nationalism came under attack while the rulers and their sycophants became engaged in blocking the inherent flourishing of Bengalee culture. This terrible situation was changed after the elections held on the 12th of June 1996. We resumed our journey towards prosperity following the footsteps of the Bangabandhu and keeping high the flag of his ideology.

Let us all, irrespective of party and opinion, move forward together join the march for peace, and actively take part for the development and prosperity of the country. Let us move forward towards the path of unity, not division, towards the path of peace, not disorder. Let us accelerate the struggle towards establishment of "Golden Bangladesh" as dreamt of by the Bangabandhu through building up a developed and prosperous Bangladesh wiping out hunger, poverty, illiteracy and backwardness.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever

*Sheikh Hasina*

Sheikh Hasina

happened to be around he would instantaneously protest such statements. We all enjoyed these light hearted family jokes. The most interesting thing about games was that there used to be occasional competitions between my father's team and that of my grandfather's. As I visit those areas now I still meet many elderly people who talk about my father's childhood days. There were many photographs and

papers of those football games in our house. They were all burnt to ashes when Pakistan Army set our house on fire. Everything has been lost.

He was very kindhearted right from his childhood. In those days there were not much opportunity for children to study. Many of them pursued education by staying in other people's houses. One had to walk four to five miles to go to school. They had to take their meal before setting out for school and had to walk back home after starving for the whole day. Our house was located at Bankpara which was near the school. My father used to take them to our home after the school hours and shared milk and rice with them. We heard from grandma that every month my grandfather had to buy quite a number of umbrellas for my father. The reason was simple. There were many poor students who had to walk miles to come to school but did not have the money to buy umbrellas, my father would give his one to some of them so that he would not burn in the scorching sun or soak in the rain. Sometimes he gave away his books to those who could not buy



Bangabandhu taking salute at the farewell parade of Indian army at Dhaka Stadium (March 12, 1972).

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