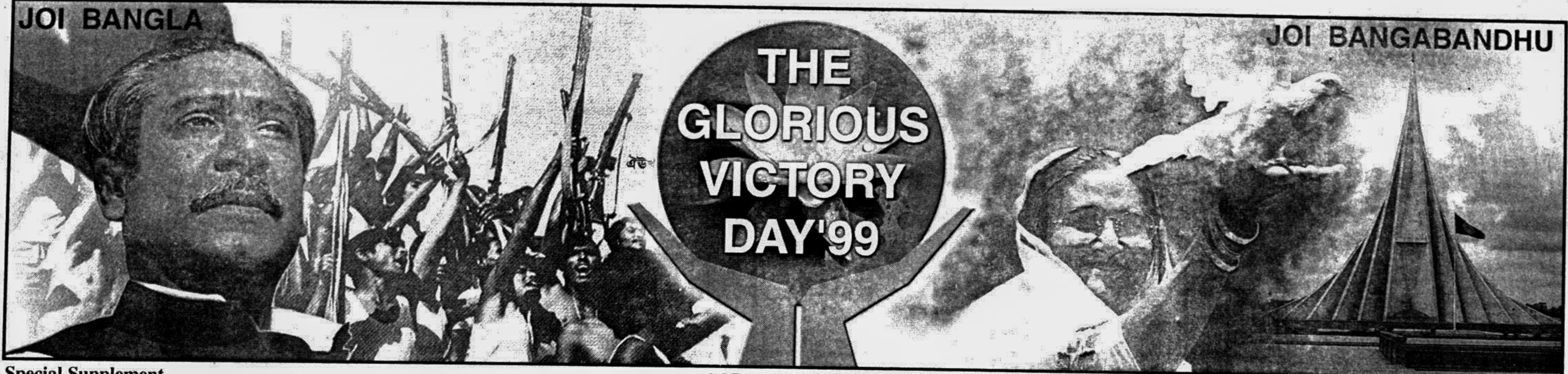


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JOI BANGABANDHU

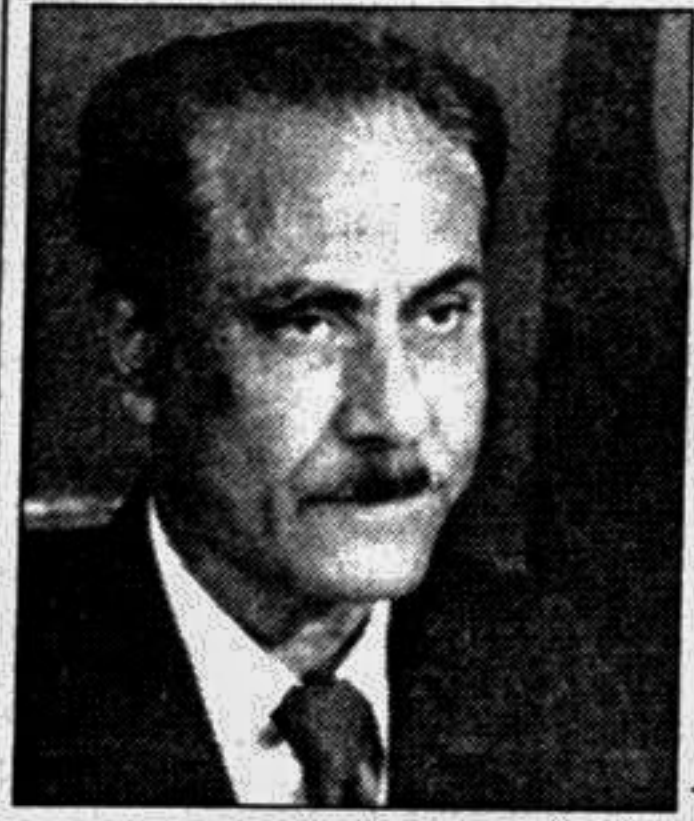
THE GLORIOUS VICTORY DAY '99



Special Supplement

16 December 1999

Concept & Design : Step Media



PRESIDENT  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH  
DHAKA  
16 December 1999

MESSAGE

The Victory Day, a glorious day in our national life, rekindles new hopes and aspirations for better living and thinking. The untold sufferings of the people and supreme sacrifice of the brave freedom fighters during the 9-month long War of Liberation are recorded in golden letters in our national history. On this day, I recall the contribution of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Organisers of freedom movement of Mujibnagar Government and the freedom fighters and pray for the salvation of the shaheed of Liberation War.

Democratic government has now been established in the country. Sincere co-operation of all is now earnestly desirable to establish democratic norms and values in the society. We must give preference to combating population increase, alleviation of poverty and expanding technical education for economic development. The prime need of the hour is to forge unity on important national issues and create favourable social atmosphere ensuring uninterrupted peace and development for the welfare of the people. All will have to devote sincerely for establishment of rule of law in the country. On this day of national rejoice, I wish a happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed

1971 And After: Perspectives Of The War

- Syed Badrul Ahsan

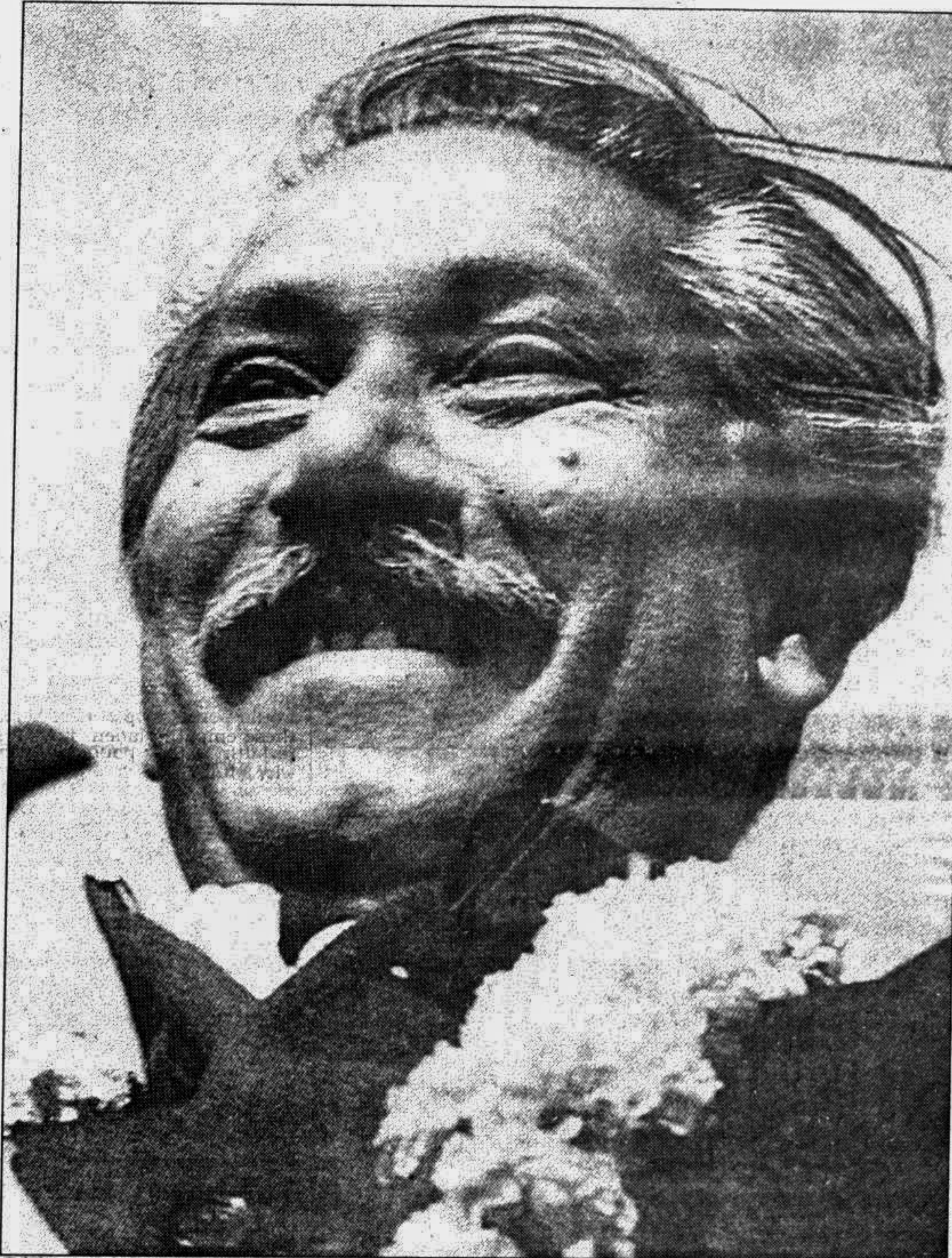
There were some very poignant, and pointed, reasons why Bangladesh needed to be born. Contrary to the belief nurtured by many, that the emergence of the Bengali state was a direct consequence of the abortive negotiations in the early part of 1971, there remains the all too historical notion that a resurgence of nationalism led to the victory of December of the year. And note that the overall concept of Bengali nationalism was not a sudden happenstance but was a movement gradually nurtured in the years leading to the shaping of Bengali political thought over the fifties and sixties. In the sixties, while the regime of Field Marshal Ayub Khan sought to project Bengali politics as plain adventurism resting on the bedrock of secession, a wholly different kind of truth was beginning to emerge. And the truth was the result, largely, of historical experience on the part of the Bengalis.

And the initial hurdle which came in the way of the nation was the realisation, as early as

1948, that the future threatened to be clouded over with intimations of the dark. Pakistan's founder had spoken of the need to project Urdu, a language far removed from the Bengali consciousness, as the country's vehicle of expression. It was a sentiment poorly expressed by Mohammad Ali

years of its independent existence, and then add to that the swiftness with which the military seized the state, bayoneted the constitution and then proceeded to make a mockery of politics. You then have a set of circumstances where the Bengali, if he wished to preserve the culture from

Bangabandhu, was fundamentally a guideline to freedom. It goes to Mujib's credit that he more and earlier than any other Bengali political figure understood the compulsions his people operated under. The Bengali way of life, he reasoned --- and intellectual Bengalis agreed with him --- needed to



Jinnah, and his successors only worsened matters when they chose to shoot the defenders of the Bengali language on the streets of Dhaka. That incident, of insensitivity and myopia, was but the beginning of the loss of faith in Pakistan. Connect that with the failure of the Muslim state to give to itself a constitution for the first nine

which he had sprung, needed to break free of the Pakistani stranglehold. But the growing revolt against Pakistan in the sixties was a good deal more than a mere disillusionment with the state. The Six Point programme launched by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the firebrand leader of the Awami League destined to be

reassert itself if heritage and culture and all that they entailed were to be kept alive. And Pakistan was not the field where such an exercise of the historical spirit was possible. There was a significant explanation for that: Pakistan was not equipped to be secular, and it would be futile to try transforming it into a liberal secular democracy. For that See page 20



PRIME MINISTER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH  
16 Agrahayan 1406  
30 November 1999

MESSAGE

The great War of Liberation is the greatest event of the Bangalee's history in all times. It was the culmination of long cherished independence of Bangladesh. The undaunted freedom fighters snatched the victory on December 16, 1971 after nine months of bloody war against the Pakistani occupation army under the leadership of our great leader Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It is a day of rejoice and glory for the people of all walks of life of Bangladesh.

On this day, I respectfully recollect the sacrifice of the millions of freedom fighters who embraced martyrdom in our glorious War of Independence, the grief of the oppressed and persecuted mothers and sisters, the endless sacrifice of the countrymen, the moral support and total cooperation of the peace-loving nations and people of the world, the extraordinary contribution of the four national leaders including the leaders of the Bangladesh Government in Exile and the people of all walks of life irrespective of their party opinion, participated in the war of liberation. I warmly congratulate the freedom fighters both martyred and alive.

The military rule following the assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975 pushed back the pace of development of the Bangalee nation, destroying the spirit and values of the war of liberation and distorting the history of the liberation war. During the long 21 years of autocratic rule, our great Victory Day were observed only to maintain the official formality. The Bangladesh Awami League that led the War of Liberation, after establishing the people's right to vote, returned to power on June 23, 1996, through the mandate of the people expressed in the general election. The values of the War of Liberation became free from the civil influence and our Victory Day got back its lost glory. Country's journey towards progress is being implemented through the ideology of War of Liberation and independence. Industrialisation, diversification of agriculture, development activities, alleviation of poverty, removing of illiteracy and the efforts of women development have been launched across the country. Above all, the flag of justice has been dignified through the trial of the killers of the Father of the Nation. The process of rule of law has been geared up. We have regained our lost glory in the world arena. This year the 21st February, the commemorative of language movement of the Bangalee has been recognised as International Mother Language Day keeping abreast of the membership in the Security Council of the United Nations. This recognition has adorned the Bangalee with pride and dignity.

On the great Victory Day let us take pledge for building Bangladesh free from poverty and illiteracy facing the challenge of the 21st century and joining in the global stream of modern science and technology. I am confident that Bangladesh which came into being with great promise of liveliness, wealth and prosperity would again hold its head high with honour in the world arena.

On the Victory Day, I call upon the countrymen and the Bangalees residing abroad to come forward unitedly with the spirit or War of Liberation to face the evil forces, who want to thwart the pace of nation's progress by destroying the values of the independence. I fervently call upon all especially the new generation to make their effective role in building Bangladesh economically prosperous in the new century and enhance the fame of the country at home and at international level.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever  
Sheikh Hasina

The last victory day of the millennium

Syed Manzoorul Islam

Time magazine, in a year-long exercise in nationalistic and elitist historiography, has come up with a list of 100 greatest personalities of the century, which includes statesmen, scientists, social reformers, writers, and celebrities of various sorts. The list has raised a good deal of controversy, not only because of its obvious west-centric bias but also for its failure to recognize the leaders of various liberation movements throughout the world, which have led to the decolonization of Asia and Africa. I myself find little merit in such attempts to pick '10 most' or '100 most' important people of a year or century, or a geographical area since the list excludes more deserving people than it includes. I find more interest in events than in individuals, particularly those where large scale involvement of people lead to fundamental changes in traditional and retrogressive thinking, set ups and structures. Liberation movements, subaltern uprisings and reformists attempts at the grassroots are, for me, more sure indicators of change and progress than individual brilliance and accomplishments. But individuals, when and where they've excelled against odds, do deserve our respect, and to that extent, Time's tribute to 10 or 100 accomplished individuals is also our tribute to them.

a disproportionately large part was devoted to the refugee problem, the superpower perspectives of the war, and, towards the end, to Henry Kissinger's ping-pong diplomacy that forged a new Sino-US stand against USSR, which was helping Bangladesh's struggle for independence at the time.

Whether Time includes the liberation war in its history lesson or not is however, quite immaterial for us. Whether the west, for that matter, remembers the event at all is equally besides the point-what is more at stake here is whether we ourselves remember the event or manage to forget it. There have been persistent attempts for the last 25 years (ever since Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was gunned down by Pro-Pakistan elements in that fateful day of August 15, 1975) to ignore, bypass, suppress or rewrite the history of our liberation war. It would have been understandable if the persons revising history were the collaborators of Pakistani army, or their hired historians and researchers, but the larger effort to change history has come from quarters that have included freedom fighters and close witnesses of the turbulent history of the liberation war. After the country went under martial law, and a new configuration of power with a pronounced rightist bent began to assume control the country, history was made to change channels. What emerged thereafter was a series of lies and half-truths, that replaced facts that were still fresh in people's mind, and suppression and distortion of truth. People who had directly collaborated with Pakistani forces were put in important government positions, including at the helm of ministries, and quite understandably, they began a new game of revisions and erasures. Thus, after a while, familiar names disappeared from the history books, Bangabandhu's name became a taboo, and emphasis shifted towards those freedom fighters who were with the rulers or supported their stand. Suddenly, school children were told that Bangabandhu or Tajuddin Ahmed or Captain Mansur Ali did not count; neither did Gen. Osmani or Colonel Taher, or the hundreds of thousand of students, workers, and peasants who built up the first resistance movement or led it from up front. The liberation war had no political background, there was no history prior to March 25,

1971. Indeed the long and protracted struggle that began after Mohammad Ali Jinnah, with his stern reminder that Bengalis would have to accept a subordinate position in Pakistan, was dismissed as a simple march of history. The school children and the nation as a whole were told that the war of liberation began after Ziaur Rahman's famous announcement on Chittagong radio on 27 March 1971. Although records existed (and still do), and thousands of his countrymen heard Major Zia announce the independence of Bangladesh in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the official version simply erased all references to Bangabandhu. Ziaur Rahman's announcement was a source of tremendous inspiration in those days, but in claiming exclusive ownership of it and by dropping Bangabandhu's name from it, the new historians made the whole exercise laughable. History made corrupt is not always history better forgotten-as Cicero would have claimed. In this case, history made its own arrangements. The mass movement of 1990 that toppled General Ershad from power was a reassertion of people's power, and a desire for participatory governance. And when democracy was restored, history took one step further towards a restitution of the neglected and See page 20

Victory Day : Achievement and Expectation

-Shamsuddin Peara

The history of Bengal is not replete with events of global proportion. The lush green fields and the abundantly fertile land blessed with green plains reaching up to the horizon, long monsoon and thousands of crisscrossing rivers have made the people of the land

place loving, self-contented, eco-friendly, poetic and perhaps a little lazy. That is what is the general notion about the Bengalis and that perhaps is not quite at variance with reality. Bengalis had ever been apologetic about this being non-martial and peace loving. Like most great nations of history, we Bengalis never attempted at conquering other peoples lands or making other peoples our slaves. Neither we are, nor our forefathers were greedy to grab others hand or property. Rather we were subjected to occupation by many plundering armies and conquering forces.

In the ancient and middle ages, the occupation was purely military. The invaders would come with huge armies and establish their authority to rule by the sheer forces of the weapons. People lived in scattered habitats on the fringes of rivers, forests and relatively high lands. They did not know much about who had defeated whom to occupy which land. Historians say that the vast plains of the lower deltaic Bengal did not have government of any kind until the middle of the 8th century when Gopal was elected

king by his peers. The Brahmins, elite's, kshatrias and traders lived independently in their homes and created their own autonomous estates independent of any control by any state. In fact the state did not exist as such. The period was also termed by Kautilya in his Arthashastra as that of 'matsanyay', during which those who had the power of the muscle imposed their will on those who did not have that. Hundreds of fiefdoms sprang over the land of Bengal.

The first major event in the history of Bengal was election of Gopal as the king. Although history does not give much credence to this event, the event was unique and had an enduring impact in shaping the later day history of Bengal. Those who say that democracy does not suit the genius of our people should look into the middle of the eighth century and take lessons on this.

The battle of plassey was the next major event of great historical importance. We had to wait for exactly one thousand years for it to happen on 23 June 1757.

The 16th of December 1971 was the third such day in the history of the Bengali speaking people that had global significance. It had global significance for more than one reasons. First, it changed the map of the world permanently by See page 20



Commander of the Pakistani occupation army signing the document of surrender on 16 December 1971 in Dhaka