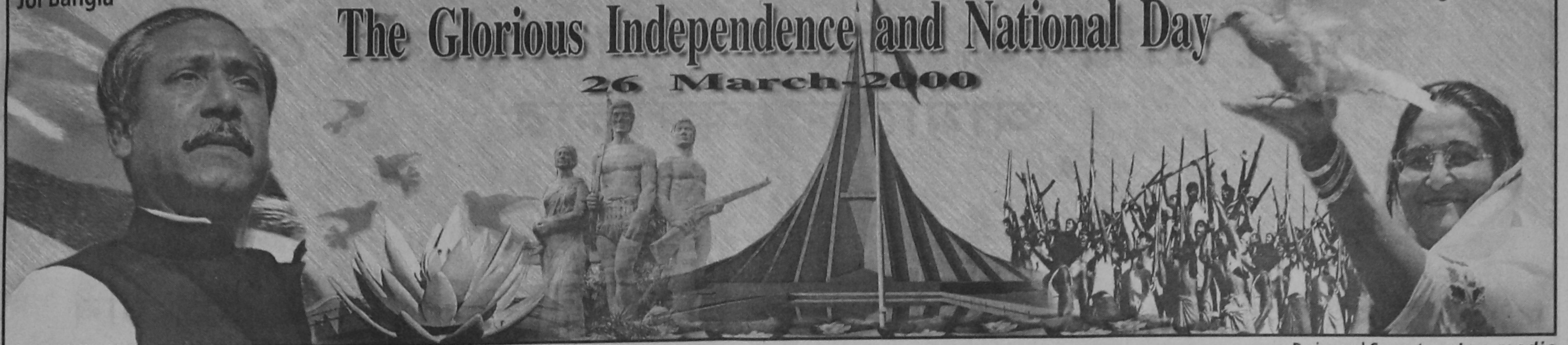


Joi Bangla

Joi Bangabandhu

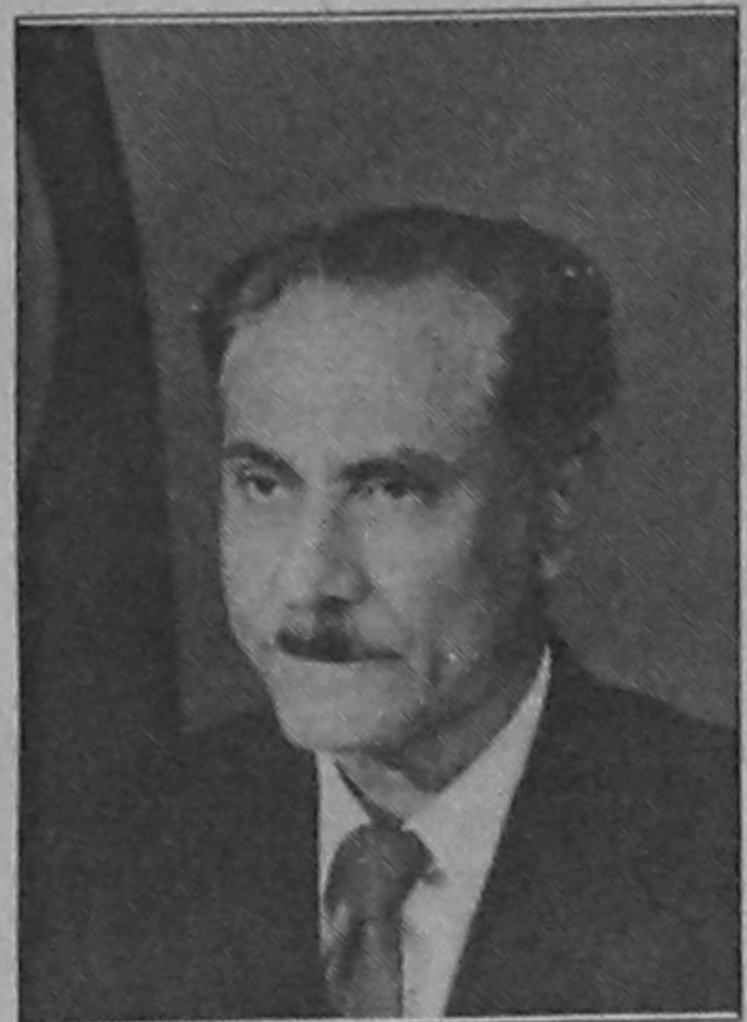
The Glorious Independence and National Day

26 March 2000



Special Supplement

Design and Concept: step media

PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message

On the 26th anniversary of the Independence and National Day, I extend my felicitation to my countrymen living at home and abroad. On this occasion I pay my homage to the memory of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and pray for the eternal peace of the martyrs of War of Liberation.

The greatest achievement of our national life in the last millennium is our freedom. The praiseworthy heroism and endless sacrifice of the courageous people of all walks of life including the freedom fighters, is an unforgettable part in the history of the country. The glorious history and acts of heroism of the liberation war would continue to inspire the people of the country with patriotic zeal through the ages.

The people of Bangladesh love democracy. With a view to flourishing democratic norms and ideas all should be tolerant to the opinions of others and to keep away from confrontation. All should reach consensus on important national issues. It is the desire of the countrymen that all should devote to free the hard-earned democracy from various obstacles through peace, amity and broad-based unity.

It is my sincere desire that all the people would rise above personal and party interests and combine their intellects and efforts for the development of the country and welfare of the nation.

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed

The way the journey commenced

Ajay Das Gupta

I recently visited the Bangladesh Bank Library in connection with a research work on the propensity to save and take loans from different banks of Bangladesh. During the visit, I got the opportunity to look into some old publications. One of these was the schedule of Bank Statistics-1973. It contained the following figures on foreign currency reserves in Bangladesh.

Date	Amount of reserves (in Taka)
17 December, 1971	0 crore taka
31 January, 1972	0 crore taka
29 February, 1972	17.26 crore taka
31 December, 1972	216.71 crore taka
31 December, 1973	135.13 crore taka

The independence of Bangladesh was declared on the midnight of 25th March, 1971. The country's Independence Day is therefore observed on 26th March. The heroic Bangladeshis defeated the Pakistani occupation forces in the battlefield through their valor and courage. Led by Lieutenant General Niazi, the Pakistanis surrendered unconditionally on 16 December, 1971.

The statistics in the Bangladesh Bank document shows the picture of Bangladesh economy after 24 years of relentless exploitation by the Pakistanis and 9 months of a bloody liberation war. The foreign currency reserves on the very first day after liberation of the country was zero.

The amount of reserves is currently measured in terms of US dollar. But at that time, both British pound and US dollar were used for the purpose. What was the equivalence of zero taka in pound or dollar? This type of

question does not require any answer. But it shows in what circumstances the economy of the country started its sojourn.

It was not that all indicators of the economy were at zero. But in a land of seven crore people, 80 percent of the people were living below the poverty line at that time. That implied that they could not even take two meals per day. And nearly 50 percent of the population could not get even one full meal per day. These families accounted for 40 percent of the population.

During the first six months of 1972, Bangladesh earned Taka 66 crore from exports. Between July, 1972 and June, 1973, this earning rose to 285 crore 59 lakh taka. Import payments during the first 6 months of 1972 were Taka 173 crore 29 lakh. Of this amount, Taka 159 crore were received as loans and grants. Import payments during 1972-73 financial year stood at Taka 767 crore. Of this amount, foreign loans and grants accounted for Taka 421 crore.

The small size of the economy at that time is evidenced from the statistics on revenue income of the government. During 1972-73 financial year, Taka 181 crore were collected as direct and indirect taxes. Direct taxes totaled only 25 crore taka. Of the amount, Taka 14 crore were received as income tax. Indirect tax, on the other hand, totaled Taka 156 crore.

The gross domestic product during the period was Taka 4530 crore. Agriculture accounted for 60 percent (Taka 2722 crore) of the total. The contribution of the manufacturing sector was Taka 330 crore (10.4 percent), energy sector

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Freedom Down The Years

Syed Badrul Ahsan

In the nearly three decades since the liberation of the country, a huge number of hurdles have been crossed and new barriers have been put before the nation. There have been new dreams built out of old ones; and new nightmares which have thrived on the backs of those shaped earlier by forces of the sinister kind. And yet, for all the travails -- for there have been more travails in our collective life than triumphs, for reasons not too unfathomable --- the nation has moved on. Yes, the movement has for much of the three decades we speak about been rather erratic. Again, there have been reasons for that. But look deep into the essence, into the

sensibilities of the country. And you will be liable to come by a huge reservoir of good, of things decent, in the soul of the land. The spirit of poetry still permeates the hamlets and towns of Bangladesh; the quality of music, that which has added constantly to the creation of aesthetics, has remained. And politics, despite the corruption wrought in it by years of extra-constitutional intervention and the decline of quality in people who do politics, has endlessly been a thrill, a mechanism for change.

There is a need to deal with the fundamentals of what has gone on in the past thirty years or so. And as we look back at the history of the country as it has evolved over

the years, we spot all those little pools of behaviour, our own, which inform us that in a very broad measure, we have succeeded in creating for ourselves an identity both within the parameters of our society and across the bigger vistas of global politics. The national economy has surely not been of the kind which will make us happier than we are. But, at another level, there is the knowledge that on the global scale we have made it possible for our trade and industry to find access to the world. Our exports, and export items, have diversified over the years. Yes, jute has paid a terrible price, owing to our own inadequacies as well as the changed perceptions of business around the globe. Our tea struggles for a decent

place in the trading markets of the world. But there are our garments, where we have succeeded in creating a niche for ourselves. Tens of thousands of our poor have found a foothold, however tenuous, on security through employment in the industry. There is much, however, even as we speak, that could be done to improve the quality of life for our workers. That is a goal as we set about doing business in the fourth decade of freedom.

Over the years, thousands, perhaps millions, of our people have travelled abroad --- and that has meant trekking to the resource-rich Middle East as also South East Asia --- in search of

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DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

"This may be my last message, from today Bangladesh is independent."

I call upon the people of Bangladesh, wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved."

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
26 March 1971

Political Ideology-Plinth of the War of Liberation

Fakir Abdur Razzaque

they learnt in different ways, is distorted to a greater extent. It is the change in politics on the fight for our freedom, that tarnished the glory of the war of liberation for long twenty nine years. Following the winning of independence the great leader of the War of Liberation and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was brutally assassinated along with the members of his family. The heinous and gruesome killing was for giving the spirit, ideology, steps and stages of our war of liberation a totally and diagonally opposite course. As a matter of fact, at that point of time a black of history started sending the glory, spirit and principles of the world pulsating war of our liberation to the nadir of distortion.

March the 26th is the glorious day of our Independence. As it is in every year, the great day will also be celebrated with gaiety, ferrous and enthusiasm through scores of official programme and functions organised by the members of the public.

This year the celebration marks the 30th day and 29th anniversary of independence. With the passage of time a good number of young members of our posterity do not know about the cardinal principles that led us to the war of liberation, the aims and objectives of our political struggle and lot many facts associated there to. What

The country was under pro-

Pakistani reactionary and communal politics. The whole nation, full of lust and thirst for liberation was dragged to uncertainty and darkness.

In such an uncertainty and amidst acts of distortion and frustration the country had a general election in 1966 where people gave their mandate in favour of Bangladesh Awami League, the political party led the war of liberation. It was quite natural that the government of Awami League with Sheikh Hasina the daughter of the Bangabandhu at the apex has taken steps to re-establish the glory and spirit of the war of liberation pushing aside the debris dust and dirt of distortion. It is how the image, spirit and the lost glory of the war of liberation has been re-established though it is not easy to erase overnight the scars of distortion and

conspiracy piled up in twenty one years. On the other hand the country was run by undemocratic and autocratic power who established and posted anti-liberation forces and elements in key-positions of the society and administration in line

with their ideals and designs. They are busy with their ploys and acts at different levels. Also it is not easy to uproot them. In the face of all these odds the government is there uphold the spirit and ideals of the war of liberation.

The war of our liberation had distinct history and aim like other nations of the world who have fought for their freedom. This is why the war of liberation is called political war as liberation is for winning political freedom and achieving distinct political

aims and objectives. Liberation demands the fulfillment of certain political aims and objectives besides economic freedom in the true sense of the term, not mere having a new homeland, new national flag or national anthem. Keeping this in view Bangabandhu said 'Political freedom is meaningless without economic emancipation.'

The Bengalees were at times ruled deprives of their due and economically sucked by British, Pakistani and native masters for hundreds of years and about to lose heritage of their own. Though they tried to rise on occasions, their endeavors were defeated in the face of strong opposition of oppressors. They became conscious about their culture, heritage, politics, economic condition and level of

The 26th March is the Independence and National Day of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Father of the Bangalee nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of the country in the early hours of the day in 1971. Our beloved independence led by Father of the Nation was achieved through a prolonged struggle for self-rule, the sanguinary War of Liberation, self-sacrifices of three millions of martyrs, untold agony of two hundred thousand mothers and sisters, and the huge sacrifice of the people. With deep respect and gratitude I recall everybody who made their contributions in achieving our national independence. I also recall with gratitude the contributions of all the friendly countries, institutions and individuals who extended cooperation in various ways during our struggle for independence and War of Liberation. On the great day of independence I convey my best wishes and hearty felicitations to all the members of the Bangalee living at home and abroad including the valiant freedom fighters.

Independence is the greatest achievement in the history of the Bangalee which initiated a far-reaching and massive change in the imagination of the people of the country. Being freed from the subjugation and colonial rule of thousand years, the nation has been crowned with its own identity and self-respect in the global forum. The great desire for attaining democracy and equity in the national life has been emerged abreast with political, economic and intellectual emancipation. A worldwide vying for investment in Bangladesh has started. Bangladesh is now a country of potentiality having strong democratic base. The great Ekushe (21st February), the commemorative of the establishment of the rights of mother tongue of the Bangalee has been crowned with the glory of the 'International Mother Language Day'. This year the history and the heroic ballad of glorious struggle for our Language Movement has been recalled with love and respect in all the countries of the world through the observance of the day.

Since assumption of office in 1996 Bangladesh Awami League has been working relentlessly to implement programmes for establishing the spirit of independence and the War of Liberation and fulfilling election pledges in phases. The process of establishing the rule of law in the country has been strengthened through the pronouncement of the historic verdict of the Bangabandhu murder case. We have been continuing our efforts to ensure people's participation in governing the country through a powerful local government system. We have been working with self-confidence and conviction for maintaining peace and security of the people. We are committed to build up a 'Sonar Bangla' (the Golden Bangla) free from poverty, hunger and illiteracy in fulfillment of the dream of Father of the Nation. I seek all out cooperation from my countrymen in these efforts.

On the eve of the Independence Day, I call upon the countrymen to build up a vigilant resistance against the sinister plot of the anti-liberation forces, communal elements, autocrats and the identified reactionaries so that by no means the foes of freedom and progress can get further scope to bring about a catastrophe to the nation taking advantage of our negligence.

Let the conscience of the Independence and National Day be omnipresent in the imagination of the nation.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina

Sheikh Hasina

education with the birth of Pakistan. Their solidarity found a plinth and the sense of self respect started arising in them which got a boost 1952 during the historic movement of the mother tongue. Since then they started becoming more aware of their legitimate demand history, heritage, politics and economy in steps what reached the peak in 1971. The democratic, secular and progressive political forces contributed at lot to this awareness where the sacrifices of political leaders like Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy, Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman played a very significant role. It was the dictate of the history that made Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman emerge the unanimous leader of the Bangalees. It is the Bangabandhu, who science the fifties of the bygone century had shouldering the historic responsibility to make the people aware of their dues guide them to political and economic emancipation and imbued them to stand up in

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