

the journey commenced

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contributed Taka 8 crore, construction sector Taka 144 crore, housing sector Taka 236 crore and banking, commerce, transport and other sectors Taka 1090 crore.

Agricultural commodities then formed the main plank of the economy. But production of rice, jute, tea and sugarcane decreased as fallout of the liberation war. Production of rice during 1969-70 fiscal year was 11.8 million tons. That came down to 9.9 million ton in 1972-73. At the same time, production of jute came down from 7.2 million bales to 6.5 million bales and that of tea from 66.8 million pounds to 53.2 million pounds.

The Pakistani rulers neither encouraged nor extended support to setting up of industries in Bangladesh. The Adamji-Bawani group set up some jute mills during the fifties to plunder the country's jute resources. During fiscal 1969-70, these mills produced 5 lakh 61 thousand tons of jute goods. But production came down to 4 lakh 46 thousand tons after independence for obvious reasons. When the Pakistani owners and managers of these mills fled the country towards the end of the liberation war, they left no liquid asset behind. A segment of the skilled workforce also left. Production of jute and jute goods was adversely affected as a consequence.

The same picture could be observed in textiles, paper and newsprint, sugar and cement industries. Sugar production in 1969-70 was 93,000 tons. It came down to 19,000 tons in 1972-73. Paper production declined from 31,000 tons to 23,000 tons. And cement production decreased from 53,000 tons to 32,000 tons.

In 1972, total number of jobless persons were half million per capita GDP in 1972 was only Taka 610. That translated into a mere Taka 1.70 per capita per day. What were the prices of essential commodities immediately after independence? In January, 1972, a seer of crude rice in the Dhaka market was available at Taka 1.19 and medium quality rice cost Taka 1.25 per seer. However, crude rice was sold at 0.95 taka per seer in the northern districts. In Dhaka, a seer of lentil was priced at Taka 2. Onion was priced at Taka 1 per seer, potato at Taka 0.62, beef at Taka 3, Ruhi fish at Taka 4, mustard oil at Taka 7.50, coconut oil at Taka 9, and sugar at Taka 3. A yard of long cloth was priced at Taka 6.

The Pakistani rulers did not take any initiative to develop the economy of Bangladesh. Neither did they consider utilizing the region's own resources. And that was why many economists and experts were doubtful whether Bangladesh would be able to sustain itself as an independent country. Some people apprehended that social anarchy would prevail if the huge population indulged in tussles over limited resources.

The people of Bangladesh have overcome that challenge. In his address to the nation over radio on 26th March, 1972, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had said, "I shall not make false promises to you while standing on the red cover of blood left by lakhs of martyrs. I never made any false promise to anybody throughout my life. The enemy has destroyed everything that Bangladesh possessed. They have left nothing behind. I am very worried about how this country would be run! But we want to transform this graveyard Bengal into a golden Bengal. This country of ours can be built anew through hard work".

The economy of the country has made great strides during the past 28 years. At the end of 1998-99 fiscal year, the GDP stood at Taka 1,74,926 crore in current price. Per capita GDP stood at Taka 13,655. If 1984-85 is considered as the base year, then the GDP for 1998-99 was Taka 75,573 crore. The growth rate of GDP has been over 5 percent during the past four years. The GDP recorded a rise even after the most devastating flood of the century in 1998. In the very first season after the floods, there was a bumper harvest of

Boro rice totaling 1 crore 5 lakh ton, which was an all-time record. During the Aman season of 1999 as well, rice production was over 1 crore ton—which was another record. Side by side with sincere effort of the farmers, supply of agricultural inputs by the government such as fertilizer, seed and credit also contributed to this bumper harvest.

Bangladesh has made substantial progress in the field of foreign trade. During 1998-99, the country's export receipts were 531 crore US dollar and import payments were 800 crore US dollar.

Side by side with increase in revenue earnings, the government's development budget has also been growing bigger. Alongside this, private sector investment is on the rise. Newer sectors are now being identified for investment. Initiatives are also being taken to utilize the natural resources like gas in a planned way. The communication network is also being developed. A new horizon for economic growth has now been opened with the construction of the Bangabandhu Bridge over the Jamuna.

The challenge of building a prosperous country now lies ahead of us. This task is not so easy. In a country of 1,47,570 square kilometres, our population density is 870 per sq. m. The population density immediately after independence was nearly half the current figure. With the increase in population pressure on cultivable land, the figure jumped to 1,367 per sq. m. during 1994-95. This figure has now risen to 1466 in 1998-99. Per capita availability of food-grains was 445 grams during 1992-93 fiscal year. The figure was 437 grams in 1993-94, 449 grams in 1997-98 and 525 grams in 1998-99. However, this indicator does not yet seem to be very attractive.

Nearly half of our population still live below the poverty line. The per capita food that reaches them is much below 535 grams. They are also deprived of basic needs such as education, health and housing. However, the picture of the economy would have been undoubtedly different if there was no military misrule and autocracy for long two decades. These dictators seized power after killing our independence heroes like Bangabandhu. And they maintained their hold on power through cruel repression. They have finally been ousted through the long and heroic struggle of the masses.

The Awami League government, which came to power through the general elections of June, 1996, has been paying attention to reviving the spirit of the liberation war. It was rather sad that they had to do it again in a country of three million martyrs. The leaves of priceless time in our history have perished from our lives. But there is no time now for getting frustrated. We have to remain vigilant so that another such fate does not befall the nation again. Alongside that, we should redouble our efforts with full commitment for economic progress of the nation. Not only for our map and flag, a developed and prosperous Bangladesh was the dream of 1971. What is now required is rapid realization of that dream.

Translated by Helal Uddin Ahmed

Freedom Down The Years

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jobs. The struggle has in a very large number of instances paid off. The results of the hard work are to be spotted in the many villages dotting the nation's landscape. Families live better, children go to school. More importantly, economic well-being --- of those whose sons and fathers have worked desperately hard abroad --- have instilled in them a sense of purpose, a good degree of the importance of their political rights and responsibility. Many of our children have made their way to the West and taking full advantage of the education system there, have done well for themselves. At home, the national education system, stymied by years of neglect and arbitrary acts on the part

THE PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Mujibnagar, Bangladesh, Dated 10th of April, 1971

Whereas free the elections were held in Bangladesh from 7th December 1970 to 17th January 1971, elect representatives for the purpose of framing a Constitution,

AND Whereas at these elections the people of Bangladesh elected 167 out of 169 representatives belonging to the Awami League,

AND Whereas General Yahya Khan summoned the elected representatives of the people to meet on the 3rd March 1971, for the purpose of framing a Constitution,

AND Whereas the Assembly so summoned was arbitrarily and illegally postponed for indefinite period,

AND Whereas instead of fulfilling their promise and while still conferring with the representatives of the people of Bangladesh, Pakistan authorities declared an unjust and treacherous war,

AND Whereas in the facts and circumstances of such treacherous conduct Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of the 75 million people of Bangladesh, in due fulfilment of the legitimate right of self-determination of the people of Bangladesh, duly made a declaration of independence at Dacca on March 26, 1971 and urged the people of Bangladesh to defend the honour and integrity of Bangladesh,

AND Whereas is the conduct of a ruthless and savage war the Pakistan authorities committed and are still continuously committing numerous acts of genocide and unprecedented tortures, amongst others on the civilian and unarmed people of Bangladesh,

AND Whereas the Government by levying an unjust war and committing genocide and by other repressive measures made it impossible for the elected representatives of the people of Bangladesh to meet and frame a Constitution and give to themselves a Government,

AND Whereas the people of Bangladesh by their heroism, bravery and revolutionary fervour have established effective control over the

territories of Bangladesh,

We, the elected representatives of the Bangladesh, as honour-bound by the mandate given to us by the people of Bangladesh whose will is supreme, duly constituted ourselves into a Constituent Assembly, and having held mutual consultations, and

in order to ensure for the people of Bangladesh equality, human dignity and social justice, declare and constitute Bangladesh to be Sovereign People's Republic and thereby confirm the declaration of independence already made by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and do hereby affirm and resolve that till such time as a Constitution is framed, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman shall be the President of the Republic and that Syed Nazrul Islam shall be the Vice-President of the Republic, and that the President shall be the Supreme Commander of all the Armed Forces of the Republic,

shall exercise all the Executive and Legislative powers of the Republic including the power to grant pardon, shall have the power to appoint a Prime Minister and such other Ministers as he considers necessary, shall have the power to levy taxes and expend monies, shall have the power to summon and adjourn the Constituent Assembly, and do all other things that may be necessary to give to the people of Bangladesh an orderly and just Government,

We the elected representatives of the People of Bangladesh, do further resolve that in the event of there being no President or the President being unable to enter upon his office or being unable to exercise his powers and duties due to any reason whatsoever, the Vice President shall have and exercise all the powers, duties and responsibilities herein conferred on the President.

We further resolve we undertake to observe and give effect to all duties and obligations that devolve upon us as a member of the family of nations and under the Charter of United Nations.

We further resolve that this proclamation of independence shall be deemed to have come into effect from 26th day of March, 1971.

We further resolve that in order to give effect to this instrument we appoint Prof. Yusuf Ali our duly Constituted Potentiary and to give to the President and the Vice-President oaths of office.



March 1971 : Women walk with rifle on their shoulder walking the streets of Dhaka



A village burnt to ash by Pakistani occupation army

eminently capable of restoring to ourselves the dignity which evil men take away from us. The assassins of the nation's founding father have been tried and

Three and a half years into freedom, the country slipped into the shadows of unconstitutional government. The very evils we struggled for years to wipe off our slate in the years before 1971 --- and those were the evils of military rule and a consequent rise of the military-civilian bureaucracy in our clime --- sadly came back with the assassination of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the members of his family and the men who guided the nation through the choppy seas during the struggle for freedom. Our heroes on the fields of battle in 1971 died in tragic circumstances in the land of freedom. That was our shame. It took years, twenty one years to be precise, for decency, for secular democracy, to return to the land. In the times since the general elections of June 1996, we have done credit to ourselves through letting the world know that we are eminently capable of restoring to ourselves the dignity which evil men take away from us. The assassins of the nation's founding father have been tried and found guilty, and the process goes on to bring the fugitives to justice. The rule of law, we keep telling ourselves, has been upheld.

War of Liberation

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arms for the war of liberation. People in return, accepted him as their undisputed leader.

The aims and ideals of our war of liberation got its roots in the struggles the nation undergone from 1947 to 1971 for just demands and politico-economic objectives. This arduous journey made them united and strong enough to go for the war of liberation. It was not possible for them to achieve the objectives being within the Pakistani frame work of state. They were in need of a separate state of their own to fulfil the dream of being free from the clutches deprivation where they suffered for ages.

The politics of the country in the sixties took the route having political goals in front. This paved their way to the war of liberation. Their advancement towards winning the liberation got momentum through the phases of anti military movement for democracy, historic Six points movement, movement against Agartala conspiracy case ro-cultural and anti communal movement and the mass upheaval of 1969.

Bangabandhu in co-insurance will the will and aspirations of the people, designed the tomorrows of the politics of the country what he had been dreaming of from easy sixties. He united the people through raising six points demand and taking several programmes to build national solidarity. The National Election of 1970 provided him with a legitimate weapon to translate the long chanced dream into reality. His plan and strategy worked and he were peoples verdict what he was needing very much.

Bangabandhu immediately after winning the mandate of the people, started negotiating with Pakistani rulers. He was fully aware that he might not be able to fulfil the demand even if he proceeded democratically with the Pakistanis. The Pakistanis were to stand against the Bengalees for sectorial interest. He thought such sets of the Pakistani rulers would be labeled illegal, inhuman and anti fundamental right by the world, outside. He thought it would help him convince the conscience of the world and step forward towards liberation. In reality, that is what happened. Bangabandhu's dream and the ultimate aim was liberation of the country. He, justifiably made the Pakistanis responsible for everything and called the nation for the course of liberation on the 7th March, 1971 at the Race Course Maidan. The call was formally given on the 26th of March 1971.

What was the ideal of the war of our liberation and fight for freedom? Basing on what political ideology 30 lac people sacrificed the lives at the altar of independence? No significant works have done on this in the form of research and publication though 29 years have been elapsed. Those we have in written form is very much general in nature and not at all ample. Starting from the days of Language movement the Bangale upheavals through innumerable struggles, movements, oppressions, inhuman tortures and sacrificing lives established the fact that they are indomitable. They proved it time and again when they had been under the mughals the British and the Pakistanis. The rulers got ample proofs that the Bengalees were the last to allow any act against their nationalism go

unchallenged. The peasant movement, language movement, movements against autocracy and communalism besides struggle for democracy and the right for self ruling made their objectives crystal-clear and these are democracy, Bengali Nationalism, socialism and Secularism. This is also in conformity with their struggles spun over for the last two centuries.

The undisputed leader of the Bengal in the light of all struggles and movement of the past and those against the Pakistanis made it clear to the eminent student and youth leaders of the sixties that the movements were to be orchestrated to achieve those four goals and they were groomed and trained accordingly. Harboring this in mind all overwhelmingly took part in the war of liberation.

The promulgation of our independence, prepared on April, 10 and formally announced on April 17 in the oath taking ceremony of the Revolutionary government at the Mujib Nagar Mango orchard of Vaidyanathatala under Meherpur, the aims and objectives of our war. Basing on these principles the "Mujib Bahini" was contributed to the members of what it was made clear during their training that those would be the founding plinth of the independent country.

Bangabandhu on his return to the country with the birth of the independent country along with rehabilitation works undertook the task of rewarding the nation with its constitution in the first phase of the framing constitution he determined the cardinal principles of the independent country. He considered it imperative that the aims, objectives and ideology that drove the nation to the war of liberation should be clearly written down so that no confusion could be raised regarding the definite principles of National Freedom fight. This is why Bangabandhu Shouldered the historic responsibility through incorporating four Principles as the founding pillars of the state- Democracy, Socialism, Secularism and Bengali Nationalism.

All struggle for liberation of the world has distinct base of ideals and principles. Bangladesh is no exception. Those who ventured to make chaos and confusion on it, tried to do it with political ploys. The difference between our war of liberation and those of other countries lies in the span of time. We won our independence in nine month only though armed struggle. May be, this is one of the reasons why the ideals and principles of our war of independence brought to light with proper impetus when it was ought to be our independence is the ultimate outcome of the series of political struggles started taking place with the birth of Pakistan. It was the political aims and ideal that made all democratic political parties, progressive socialistic organisations and professional and people of all works of life and social status having supported and belief in those politics including public servants, peasant, factory workers and students join hands and spontaneous and overwhelming participation in the great war of liberation to win the independence of the country. There is no room for any confusion whatever that policies is the plinth of very beloved for independence and the war of liberation. [Translation: Ranajit Biswas]

Mother's Language Day. There is reason for pride here again.

These are the thoughts which work, in us, as the vehicle to our future. Much of what a nation achieves for itself is dependent on the way in which it is able to come to terms with its past. And our past, the years of the struggle for political and social rights, the times when we waged war for freedom, will forever remain glorious chapters in the history of our people. And there are the dark years, those we have spoken of, whose sinister legacy we must roll back, if the growth and preservation of national self-esteem is the objective. It is a good country, a decent country, brimming over with ideas, peopled by enlightened men and women, that we must leave behind for our children, and their children.

That surely is not too much to ask for.