

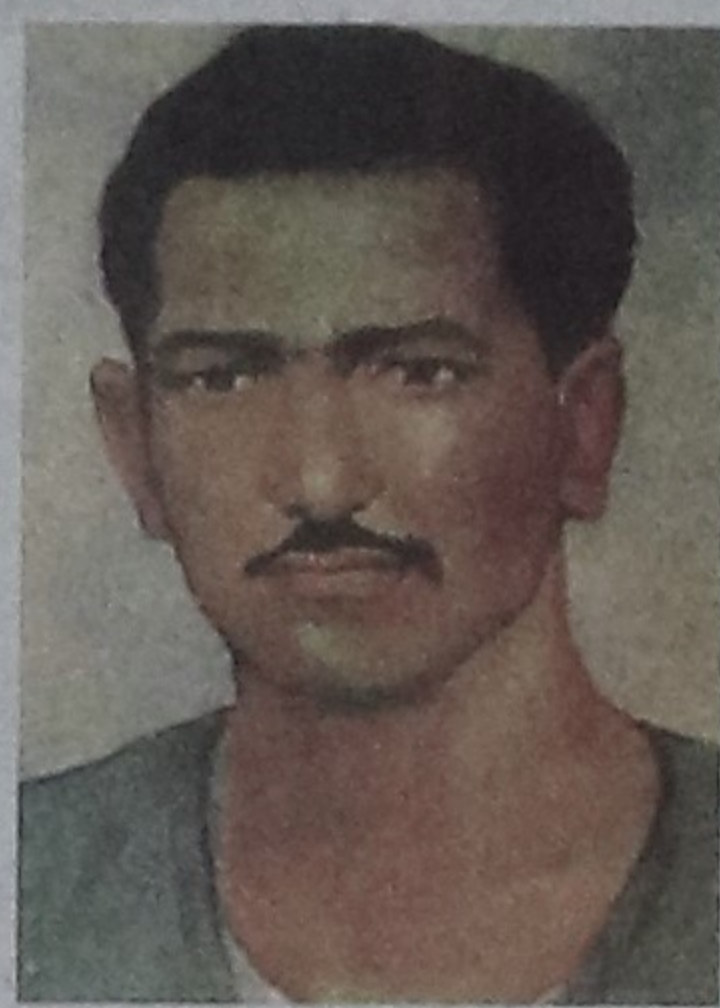
THE VALIANT SONS OF OUR SOIL— WE WILL EVER REMEMBER YOUR SUPREME SACRIFICES



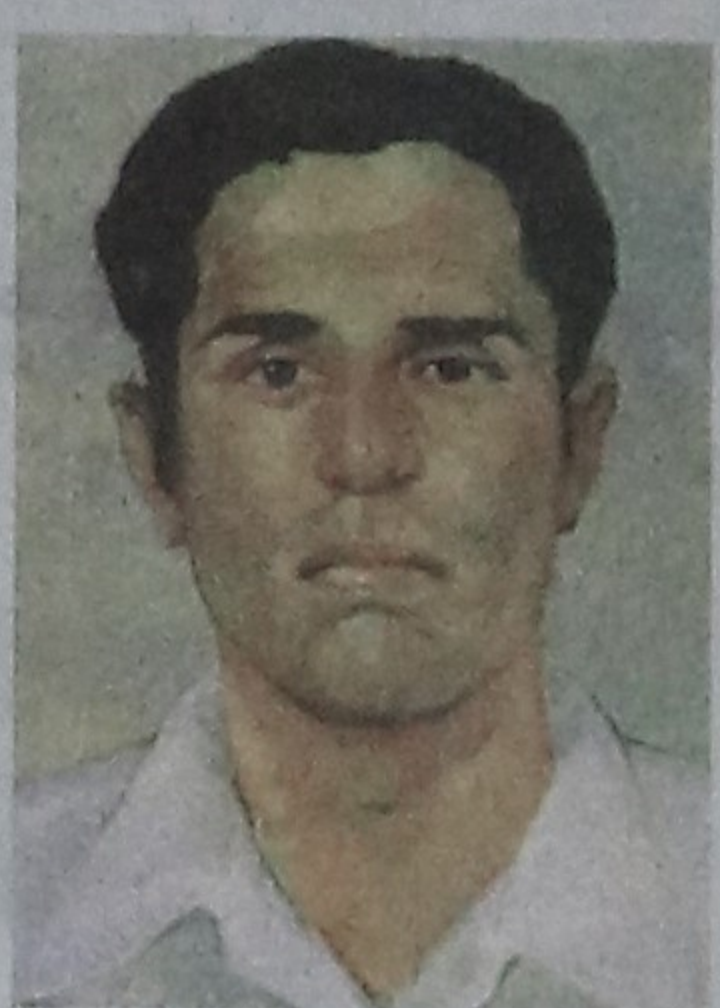
Shaheed Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir, Bir Sreshtho



Shaheed Sepoy Mostafa Kamal, Bir Sreshtho



Shaheed Sepoy Hamidur Rahman, Bir Sreshtho



Shaheed Engine Room Artificer Md. Ruhul Amin, Bir Sreshtho



Shaheed Flight Lieutenant M Matlur Rahman, Bir Sreshtho



Shaheed Lance Naik Nur Mohammad Sheikh, Bir Sreshtho



Shaheed Lance Naik Munshi Abdur Rouf, Bir Sreshtho

MIGHT, MYTH AND MY COUNTRY

Expressions of love for one's homeland may take different forms depending on how one looks at it. 'My country—right or wrong' is one old saying that oozes patriotism. One may also find moderate views holding the country in high esteem while wishing of progressive development. There are others who might feel that however poor and backward a country is, it still deserves adoration of the most lofty kind. Even as we go global, there is hardly any qualitative change in that much-touched sentiment. In fact, such a sentiment is an inseparable state of a nation. Big or small, rich or poor a country stands tall above all nations in the estimation of its own people. These people, insulated by a sense of pride, are the real strength of a nation. These are the people who can make supreme sacrifices in the event of an attack on its soil, language, or religion. Call it might, the appropriate response against an adversary whenever the need arises.

peace and harmony rather than strife and aggression. So the Pakistanis felt comfortable with an imaginary idea that the Bengalees are not the type to punch back. The independence of Pakistan never brought social and economic justice to the greater wing of the country. It seemed that the Bengalees were not worthy of anything. Most striking was the disproportionate enrollment of the Bengalees in the defence forces and their attainment of high ranks. The patience of our people was misconstrued as timid acceptance of injustice. But the sting remains hidden under the wings. A volcano may easily pass as a harmless mountain.

Encouraged by its self-made myth, Pakistanis hatched conspiracies to usher in an era of persistent injustice and social deprivation. But history always provides a day for the underdogs.

It was a time for heroism. Young and old, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak—all had their minds set for the supreme sacrifice. It was a question of honour and dignity, which must be upheld at all costs. Decades of oppression by the Pakistanis, calculated humiliation of the Bengalees as unfit for profession of arms provided the opportunity for a stunning answer that shattered the myth of the Pakistanis.

Defence forces of Bangladesh, the vigilant defenders of the boundary, spearheaded the attack against the invaders. They had the training, the tactics and foremost, the oath to give life for a great cause. There is no better motivation for a soldier to orchestrate the efforts of the charged millions to achieve the common goal. And the result was the creation of an awesome force capable of inflicting a crushing blow to the adventurous Pakistani generals.

OUR FORGOTTEN AIRFIELDS OF WORLD WAR II

Recently an unexploded bomb weighing 35 kilograms was found while removing earth at village Moddha Kaspia of Chakaria Thana, Cox's Bazar. Today, many of us forgot what happened in this land about sixty years ago, but the earth still holds the memories of World War II. We know the Pearl Harbour; we also know where did the Allied Forces land on the D-day. Unfortunately, it is a forgotten chapter to us that how the war was fought in our land. We see around abandoned airfields, small landing strips and war cemeteries but we fail to appreciate the hidden story behind these fields. Why so many airfields were prepared? What can we do with these abandoned airfields?

Japanese made their first air strike against the Burmese capital, Rangoon (Yangon). The situation in Burma (Myanmar) deteriorated very fast. No substantial troops or aircraft could reach Rangoon in time to save the land. The British troops stationed in Burma, after many losses, reached India on foot crossing a rugged 140 miles hike over jungle-covered mountains. By occupying Burma, the Japanese had not only gained the access to vast resources of teak and rubber, but they also took control of the "Burma Road"—China's last overland link with the outside world. With that complete and utter defeat in Burma, the British

we look back, we get more than thirty five airfields/airstrips within Bangladesh. Out of these fields, most of them were prepared during the War. The type also differs from grass field, flexible pavement to concrete field.

In the Chittagong area, there were about ten landing grounds of different types. Besides, Chittagong, Chiringa and Cox's Bazar, there were FABs (Forward Air Base) in Ramu, Double Moorings, Dohazari and Hathazari etc. These airstrips were the grass field and today it is impossible to locate. A dozen of RAF's fighter squadrons of Spitfire, Hurricane operated from these airstrips.

direction of Burma, Comilla was ideal place for the RAF's Photo Reconnaissance. Feni had a fighter base. Hurricane and Beau fighters were operated from this airfield. Despite Japanese several air strikes, the 6000 ft long runway is still in good condition. The concrete airstrips of Bajitpur, Arahazar and Sudharam (near Majidi) still exist while the grass field at Chandina and Daudkandi are lost forever.

Air Force, only one was stationed in the then East Pakistan and only Tejgaon airfield was used intensively. As the time passed, most of the runways, taxiways, aircraft pens, workshops, communication centers were lost forever.

Finally, a number of airfields were damaged during the War of Liberation. After 1971, Bangladesh had to start from the beginning. To restore air communication within the country and rest of the world, a few airfields were repaired. But till today most of the abandoned airfields/airstrips of Bangladesh are without care. We have lost all the valuable war documents, buildings and aircraft hangers. Now the last phase of destruction is on—illegally removing the hard surfaces, occupying the land by the land grabbers etc. Therefore, the existence of these abandoned airfields/airstrips are in threat.

OPTIONS FOR THE PROTECTION
A survey may be carried out to determine total land area and condition of all the abandoned airfields/airstrips. With the help of the Government/Law Enforcing Authority, steps can be taken to recover all the occupied land.

The land of these airfields/airstrips can be handed over to Bangladesh Armed Forces/government organizations for different special agricultural projects. The aim should be not to destroy the basic structures of the airfields as far as possible, e.g., Lalmonirhat. So that, in case of war we can use these fields as Forward Air Base.

The Government is setting up EPZ (Export Processing Zone) at different places. Those airfields/airstrips, which have no possibility of future use, can be an ideal place for the construction of EPZ.

CONCLUSION
It is true that we cannot easily afford to make a new airstrip but we can preserve the old ones. In the time of need, Bangladesh can make best use of these fields, may be for defending our sovereignty or may be for developing different projects. Keeping this fact in mind, we all must stand beside to save these airfields/airstrips from the illegal land grabbers.

Lt Col Mirza Tazammal Hossain Beg, AEC



Nineteen seventy-one was such a time. It opened a unique episode in history for a people better known to be meek and docile. The might of the Bengalees lay not in the muscle but in the mind. The strength emanated from a conviction of right and wrong. It became their creed of faith. They know for sure that they had been wronged, unjustly so, and they had a great cause to fight for.

Independence of a nation always means struggle culminating in success. But the birth of Bangladesh cannot be equated with any freedom struggle in the annals of history. People pronounced freedom in one voice. The full fury of resistance pulsed in the hearts of all. The military, the militia merged with the masses. It was suddenly everybody's war. Garrisons spilled over to the city. Civilians became the most trusted comrades of men-at-arms. Conventional got easily blended to the unconventional. There was hardly any initiation, hardly any training, hardly any preparation. But there was no mistaking in the mission, no vaccination, no looking back. It was sheer determination, raw courage and rage to annihilate the occupation forces that united the diverse elements of the struggling masses.

This was suddenly a Bangladesh one has not seen before. The might of unity of a people sent shivers through the spine of the enemies. It was again a new myth in the making. It was the test of the limits of tolerance. It was the testimony of a proud people who know the best time to react.

That's my country, Bangladesh. It has always made headlines in history. The small dot in the world map in 1971 became a name carved in blood. No nation has a flag like Bangladesh's reminiscent of the terrible bloodshed the country had to witness. 1971 has seen the birth of a new Bangladesh. The history of Liberation is the history of turning weakness into strength. It is the history of turning soft clay into steel armour. The mark of a true nation is a unity in diversity. Such a nation has no islands of sorts based on artificial barriers of caste, creed or vocation.

21st November is the day to renew our pledge for a strong Bangladesh. It is a pledge for the consolidation of our achievements in 1971. It is a reminder not to repeat the history of genocide and primitive vengeance. Our martyrs had dreams. Our finest tribute to them would be our concerted endeavor to transform their dreams into a reality.

World War II and Indian Subcontinent

WW II was the largest and most violent armed conflict in the history of mankind. The war was fought on land, at sea and in the air over several diverse theatres for six years. For Britain, it was a question of survival—it had hardly any plan to defend its far-flung empires including Indian Subcontinent. In 1941, William Churchill gave Britain priorities: "First, the defense of the Island, including the threat of invasion and U-boat war; secondly, the struggle in the Middle East and Mediterranean; thirdly, after June, supplies to Soviet Russia and last of all resistance to Japanese assault."

On 7 Dec 1941, Japan made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour. The ruthless efficiency and lightning speed, which Japan showed at Pearl Harbour, brought a dimensional change in the Asia Pacific theatre. The next day, the United States declared war on Japan and became an active participant in World War II. On the other hand, Japan's vibrant entry into the War created confusion in the British Government circles. By the end of 1941, Japan brought the war to Burma—at the doorsteps of India.

WHY SO MANY AIRFIELDS?
On 8 Dec 1941, Japan invaded Thailand and launched attacks on Malaya and Singapore. By nightfall, the British lost the most of its aircraft. On 23 Dec 1941, the



Sqn Ldr RAM Kamal Uddin Mirza 3 Squadron BAF

government woke up suddenly to the possibility of an attack on India. In 1942, when the Japanese cut off the "Burma Road", Churchill telegraphed to Commander-in-Chief in India: "I must point out that at least fifteen perhaps twenty Japanese divisions (presently engaged in China) would be freed with the collapse of China and thereafter a major invasion of India would indeed be possible."

Immediately the forces started coming from abroad for the defence of India, in addition a decision was also taken to increase its resources by quick and huge number of local recruitment. Within a very short time India became a ground of war preparation. The need of numerous airfields and landing strips were felt necessary along the front line and behind to ensure favourable supply line all the time. The construction of these airfields and landing strips started in the first half of 1942. These runways were made so quickly that some of the airstrips had hardly any other solid constructions around it, sometime improvised runways were also made by placing interlocking steel plates.

THE AIRFIELDS OF BANGLADESH

There were hundreds of airfields/airstrips prepared throughout the China-Burma-India theatre. If

Chittagong was one of the busiest airfields, had two runway overlapping each other. Chiringa is at the last stage of destruction, all the rocks and bricks are gradually being stolen from its landing and parking places.

There was a military hospital beside Tejgaon Airport. Severely wounded soldiers used to be airlifted direct from the battlefield to Tejgaon. Kurmitola was a bomber base, B-25 aircraft was operated from there. Today's BAF tarmac was prepared over the old runway of Kurmitola. Bombing mission over Southern Burma was carried out from Jessore airfield. The squadron used to launch mission from Jessore at 12 o'clock at night, fly whole night and strike over different targets of Southern Burma in the early morning. For China airlift and campaign over Northern Burma, more nine airstrips were prepared in the eastern part of Bangladesh. Sylhet and Shamshearnagar were used for the purpose of China airlift (hump operation). Though the British constructed the sloppy runway of Shamshearnagar, but the Americans used it. Comilla was initially a grass field but due to its overall importance, runway was paved before 1944. Since the operation was planned around all

BANGLADESH NAVY IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Bangladesh, a developing country of South Asia, has been ill-fated with natural disaster almost every year causing a serious loss of lives, natural resources and development works. It hampers the normal flow of overall progress of the nation on her way ahead with the march of time. Natural disaster, whether localized or widespread, is always destructive and costly in its effect. It normally appears out of seasonal flood and cyclonic storms. It has, so far, claimed lives of 20 lacs people besides, and made a huge loss of national economy since 1970. In case of such devastating natural disaster, concerned departments/agencies of the government including the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MDMR) seek the help and cooperation of Armed Forces, non-government organizations (NGO'S), international and UN agencies to play their role in disaster management. Of all these organizations, Armed Forces have been the most dependable one to the government in facing such disaster. As such, Bangladesh Navy as a part of Armed Forces of the country, plays a paramount role with all of her available resources for the rehabilitation of the disaster stricken people.

Causes of Natural Disaster
Tornado, cyclone, hurricane, flood, drought etc. are usually experienced in Bangladesh. These devastating calamities generally originate from the Andaman and Nikobor islands. A study conducted by the experts shows the following reasons responsible for the natural disaster:

- Ecological imbalance
- Deforestation

- Environment Pollution
- Water Pollution
- Air Pollution
- Erosion
- Siltation
- Spillage at Sea

Statistics of Natural Disaster

Bangladesh has experienced roughly 34 cyclones in different coastal districts and its islands since 1960. On the other hand, tornado, drought and devastating flood have also struck around seventy times during the past years. Of these, cyclone of 12 November 70, 24 May 85, 29 April 91 and 19 May 97 are the mentionable natural disasters which claimed lives of approximately 20 lacs of people and destroyed huge natural resources and development works. In this connection a statistics of natural disasters during 1960-1997 is listed hereunder to depict the gross loss of the nation:

Statistics of Cyclone During 1960-1997

S No	Date	Area	Loss
1.	31 Oct. 60	Chittagong	5149 died, 70% houses damaged
2.	09 May 61	Chittagong	11, 468 died
3.	28 May 63	Chittagong Cox's Bazar	11,520 died, 70% house damaged
4.	11 May 65	Chittagong Bansal	17,279 died
5.	12 Nov 70	Coastal area	10 lac of people died, 92% houses damaged
6.	01 Nov 76	Barisal	2 lacs of people died
7.	24 May 85	Chittagong	24,10,935 died 70% house damaged
8.	24 Nov 88	Khulna	12133 died 20% house damaged
9.	29 Apr 91	Chittagong Cox's Bazar	1,40,000 died, 65% house-damaged
10.	02 May 94	Cox's Bazar, Teknaf	188 died
11.	19 May 97	St Martin, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong	111 died

Role of Bangladesh Navy

In addition to implementing their own work plans Bangladesh Navy is entrusted with the following

- responsibilities in accordance with the National Disaster Management Standing Orders of the Government.
- Normal Times**
- The Navy will designate three Disaster Management Focal Points at Naval Headquarters, Khulna and Chittagong.
 - Keep the naval transport station ready for long term relief operations at short notice.
 - Operations Directorate of Naval Headquarters will keep contact with Meteorological Department/Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief for receipt of warning signals and required arrangements in advance.
 - Prepare a list of serviceable water transports for relief and rescue operations for use by all concerned during a cyclone disaster.

Alert and Warning Stage

- Issue warning orders to all units.
- Establish disaster control room in Naval Headquarters and provide telephone numbers of Director of Naval Operations (office and residence), control room and duty officer to the Prime Minister's coordination cell, EOC at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Control Room of Army and Airforce.
- Take necessary arrangement for protection of ships and installations, personnel and equipment of Bangladesh Navy likely to be affected by the disaster.
- Designate one Liaison Officer to the coordination cell of the Prime Minister and keep contact with the EOC at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Control Room of Army and Airforce.

Disaster Management as per Standing Orders through annual drills and take steps for its improvement.

- Prepare plans for the protection of the ships, equipment, installations, goods and personnel of Bangladesh Navy against disasters.

Disaster Stage

- Arrange requisite manpower in Control Rooms of Naval Headquarters, Chittagong and Khulna.
- Keep all ships and stations ready for launching cyclone relief operations at short notice.
- Naval Headquarters shall keep close liaison with the Control Room of the Prime Minister's coordination cell and EOC at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.

- Adopt all possible security steps in close cooperation and coordination with the concerned civil authority.
- At the instructions of the Armed Forces Division, all the ships containing materials supplied by the agencies at the instruction of the Deputy Commissioner or Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.



Lt Cdr G Q Khan, BN

- Without prejudice to any other rules and regulations and limitations, on the request of the civil authorities the ships will be sent to the affected areas as soon as the weather becomes favourable at the instructions of the Armed Forces Division.
- At the directives of Naval Headquarters the ships/stations will assist the civil authorities.
- It will regularly send the report of the activities to the Control Rooms of Prime Minister's coordination cell and EOC at the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief.

Rehabilitation Stage

- Determine the requirement of relief and rehabilitation after assessment survey of loss and damage through the affected areas and advise government about the necessary steps in this respect has been carried.
- Assist the local administration in all possible ways for relief and rehabilitation programmes in the affected areas.

- Assist the civil authority with the distribution of relief materials among the affected people.
- Continue assistance with all steps undertaken by the local/civil authority until the return of normalcy.
- Prepare detailed reports on all aspects of relief and rehabilitation and submit the same to the National Disaster Management Council.

Capability of Bangladesh Navy

The contribution which Bangladesh Navy can render with disasters has long been recognized by the government and general mass of the country. When the country is in disaster, Bangladesh Navy utilizes all her available resources in coordination with civil administration through the Armed Forces Division, the highest coordination body of the government dealing with military. It has been seen over the years that Bangladesh Navy, because of its organizational structure, chain of command and reliable means of communication, can respond quickly, effectively and make first action in disaster management activities. As a matter of fact, Bangladesh Navy is quite capable of undertaking the following steps at any time to respond the call from the government:

- Evacuation.
- Rapid damage assessments.

- Search and rescue.
- First aid and medical treatment.
- Handling of relief.
- Logistic support for the delivery of relief supplies.
- Policing of the relief storage and distribution.
- Clearance of debris.
- Emergency repairs.
- Burial of human bodies and animal carcasses.
- Telecommunication.
- Temporary shelters including field sanitation, cooking and water supply.
- Construction / reconstruction of houses.

Preparedness

On receipt of warning of the impending cyclone, required preparedness are taken by the Maritime Headquarters (NHQ), Dhaka. Bangladesh Navy is usually prepared with the following arrangement to face the natural disaster situation:

- Pre-disaster Preparedness:**
 - Naval Ships.
 - Skilled & experienced personnel.
 - Dry food & stuff.
 - Medical team.
 - Garments.
 - Cash money.
- Post-disaster Preparedness:**
 - Rehabilitation Materials:
 - House building items.
 - Water facilities.
 - Sanitation.
 - Cleansing of environment.
 - Educational institution.
 - Establishment of communication in the local area.

Recommendations

Following matters may be taken into consideration for better disaster management on the part of Bangladesh Navy:

- Formation of disaster management emergency food reserve in naval areas.
- Identification and earmarking of disaster management resources.
- Training on disaster preparedness, relief and rehabilitation activities.
- Setting up of working groups specially with the Clearance Divers and Commandos.
- Establishing of effective early warning system in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Khulna areas.

Bangladesh Navy remains concerned with the highest priority for disaster management during calamities. Bangladesh Navy also has always stood with the people during disasters. It may be mentioned that the contribution of Bangladesh Navy during the devastating flood of 1988, cyclone of April 1991 and May 1997 could draw the attention of the nation. In such crises, Navy with her trained manpower, capabilities in terms of mobility, communication, medicare, construction etc has helped the distressed people with their best efforts. In accomplishing this noble task, Bangladesh Navy with the directives of the government has been working in coordination with civil authorities. Today, Bangladesh Navy is ready with all appropriate measures to face the disaster situation.