

16 DECEMBER

THE GLORIOUS VICTORY DAY 2007

Special Supplement

PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message

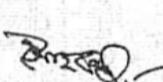
16 December, the great Victory day is one of the most memorable and glorious days in our National life. On this occasion, I extend my heartfelt felicitations and since greetings to my fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

Our long cherished Independence was achieved after the nine month-long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of the millions of our people. On this auspicious day, I pay my deep respect and sincere gratitude to the unfading memory of the thousands of freedom fighters who laid down their lives in the war of liberation. I also recall with deep respect the valiant freedom fighters and the people from all walks of life, who extended their undaunted support and co-operation in the war of liberation. The infinite sacrifices and heroism of the freedom fighters are written in golden letters in the history of Independence.

One of the prime objectives of our Independence was to build up a happy, prosperous and self-reliant Nation. Towards realising these objectives, we have already made some achievements in our national life including establishment of democratic pluralism, Bangladesh has earned highly esteem and reputation from the world community through the dedicated services of the members of our Armed Forces and expatriate Bangladeshi. We are now engaged in bringing structural reforms to make our democratic institutions more strengthen and effective. On the solemn day of victory, let it be our pledge that we should put our best endeavours unitedly and responsibly to ensure transparency and accountability at every level of our national life in order to build a happy and prosperous society. Let us all work together from our respective fields to solve our national problems and contribute to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

On this day, I wish Bangladesh continued prosperity.

Allah Hafez, Bangladesh Zindabad.


Professor Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed

Bangladesh emerged from history as a sovereign country on the 16th of December, 1971, after nearly nine months of armed warfare that followed about 24 years of political struggles. Today, we are celebrating the anniversary.

The present territory of Bangladesh had been known as East Pakistan since when the English Colonial rule ended in the year 1947. But, easy and comfortable relations between the Eastern region of Pakistan and the powers in the centre had always been a far cry. We had to shed our blood to resist the unholy governmental moves to deprive the language of the majority of population from the status and recognition it deserved. There had been a persistent hostile stance at almost all spheres, ranging from the issues of the Alphabet, of the cultural legacy and its promotion, to those of our political rights and economic development. For only once, there was a General Election in the 24-year history of Pakistan. Awami League, led by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won a landslide victory in that election. But the state power was not transferred in accordance with the people's will as reflected in the election results. When the people of East Bengal were demonstrating their anger and dismay at that unfair development, and as they forged unity in realizing their rights of self-determination, they were subjected to a brutal genocide hardly witnessed anywhere else in the world history.

This barbaric assault killed millions of people, and destroyed the honour and property of many more millions. Innumerable families were compelled to desert their homes and move places in their desperation for safety. About ten million people became refugees in India.

The people of the country, however, did not limit themselves in evading danger; they courted more dangers by forging a massive resistance. However weak in weaponry they had been, they were very strong in morale and were in high spirits of patriotism. They formed an impenetrable fortress of unity all over the country. Only a few people established the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra (Independent Bangla Radio Station), which broadcast the Declaration of Independence by Bangabandhu. Another Declaration of Independence was broadcast by Major Zia in his own voice. Bangalee members of the armed forces, EPR, Police and Ansar took up arms - and they were joined by a multitude of peasants, workers, students, professionals and middle class youths. Even those who had never before known what an armed engagement was, did not hesitate to rush to the warfront to free the motherland.

A Government of the People's Republic of

THE SIXTEENTH OF DECEMBER

Anisuzzaman



Bangladesh was formed; and, in the absence of Bangabandhu, the Skipper's role went to an unperturbed Tajuddin Ahmed. Civilian Bangalee officers and employees came forward to assist in running the government's affairs. The singers were joined by teachers; players

came shoulder to shoulder with painters; while medical practitioners found comrades in engineers. Bangalees, resident anywhere in the world, organized themselves in support of the War of Liberation. Bangalee diplomats, stationed at various Pakistan missions abroad, defected to Bangladesh.

All these developments had moved the conscience of the world community. Direct support came from India, the Soviet Union and some other countries. The intelligentsia, the media and the public opinion in countries that assumed a neutral stance, and even in those countries where the government had publicly demonstrated opposition to our cause, had firmly stood at Bangladesh's side. Celebrated personalities like Andre Malraux formed international brigades and expressed the

desire to fight for the independence of Bangladesh. The liberation struggle of Bangladesh enlisted the respect of the world community.

The Pakistan-India war began on the 3rd of December, with Bangladesh being the main warfront. By the 13th day of the war, the Pakistan army surrendered to the joint armed forces of India and Bangladesh. Bangladesh became free of its enemies.

The refugees returned to their homeland. The non-returnees were only those who shed their blood to make the soil of Bangladesh fertile. At a moment just before our ultimate Victory, we were shocked by yet another massacre. The handful of the country's enemies, who had all along maintained allegiance to the occupation forces, abducted some of the best sons of the soil. The culprits brutally killed them in the hope that

Bangladesh would never again be able to stand with its head high.

Yet, Bangladesh was destined to be born; and the 16th of December proved inevitable.

A country that came into being after so huge a sacrifice - a country that remains enveloped in the sacred memories of the martyrs - a country that had been formed on the dreams of crores of people - could not rise to the level it should have risen to. That the country could not achieve the level it deserved was due to the failure of us all. The Victory Day calls upon us, once again, to recall the memories of the days of the war; and to employ all our efforts to build a democratic and non communal Bangladesh true to the principles of Justice.

Translation: Deen Mohammad.

Victory Day

Hasnat Abdul Hye

D6 December is a red letter day in the history of Bangladesh. For the 140 million people of Bangladesh the day represents glory and pride. It is a day for rejoicing by all. The day is formally celebrated with solemnity and with fond hope for a bright and happy future. It fills the minds of 140 million people with feelings of felicity and generates a spontaneous celebratory mood. Since 1971, 16 December reminds the nation of the past when the war of liberation was fought valiantly by people from all walks of life. The remembrance of the past evokes ecstasy over the victory won as well as sorrow for the martyrs and sadness for the many tragic events that spelt disaster on many. Victory came at a great cost but it also gave deep pride and boundless joy. 16 December is celebrated, above all, for the vindication of the just cause upheld and cherished by the people. The nation pays homage to the men and women belonging to different caste, creed and class who laid down their lives or suffered great losses. The debt of gratitude to these millions will always be remembered by the nation as they celebrate Victory Day.

The Victory Day is being celebrated this year with the backdrop of death and destruction wreaked by two successive floods in August and September and a devastating cyclone that ravaged a wide swathe of land from coastal areas to 24 inland districts, in November. The survivors are struggling hard to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives with the help of the government, civil society, friendly countries and aid agencies. According to latest report more than three thousand people have died and many more have been injured. The number of people missing is yet to be known. Loss of property and damage to standing crops have been incalculable. As the nation celebrates Victory Day, a massive programme has been launched to distribute relief, provide medical care and arrange for rehabilitation. This year's Victory Day is unlike any in the past.

Nature of Bangladesh is generous, helping millions to eke out their living, tilling the land, catching fish and following other vocations in tune with nature. But nature also gets hostile sometimes, leaving a trail of

death and destruction. The same nature that brings happiness and tranquility through its bounty becomes the harbinger of grief and mourning because of loss inflicted. Life of people in Bangladesh, particularly in rural areas, has been entwined with this rhythmic pattern of creation and destruction from time immemorial. After survival the resilient people strive to get back on track to go on living their daily life. The Victory Day has arrived when millions are busy to stand on their feet; its message should strengthen their resolve to overcome the great calamity because the Victory Day represents the victory of the indomitable spirit of people. It declares that victory belongs to those who toil to earn an honest living, are united with each other and have faith on God Almighty. The victory heralded by 16 December embodies the spirit and sacrifice of such men and women. It pronounces that honest, hardworking and determined people will prevail over all adversity. The adversary may sometimes be evil force represented by a group of people or it may be elemental nature in its deadly fury. All those working together in the aftermath of cyclone Sidre have no doubt that the struggle that is going on in the cyclone ravaged areas will meet with success. The whole nation is united and determined in this great endeavour just as it was during the war of liberation that led to victory on 16 December, 1971. Unity and determination are the great strength and the real asset in any struggle and Bangladeshies have never been found short in these in times of crisis and struggle. This time, too, there will be no exception. Victory Day, coming as it has in the wake of the calamitous cyclone, assures of the same.

The victory heralded by 16 December, in 1971, marked the end of the first phase of a long struggle. The people of Bangladesh defeated the ruling class who tried to perpetuate colonial exploitation on them and unleashed a genocidal attack in revenge for their resistance against the evil design. That victory, earned at a great cost of life and property, offered promise of a happy and prosperous life in future. But many obstacles stood in the way to achieve the cherished goal. Hunger, disease,

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TO THE YOUNGSTERS

Rashid Haider

We have earned us a host of glorious milestones: Ekushey February, Pahela Baishakh, Independence Day and Victory Day. But, each of these achievements asks us a question: did all these milestones come our way without any effort? The question is pertinent because there are people who tend to think that these great achievements, glorious as they are, were automatic and earned at ease; as if there had not been any sacrifice, bloodletting or martyrdom behind these glories; as if all the doors to our success did open at the sheer touch of Aladdin's Lamp.

These words are primarily addressed to my young friends, whom I look forward to with the deepest sense of trust and confidence. I cannot bear to ever lose this confidence and trust. And if ever I do, that would mean death to my soul; and I would be left to live a soulless life. To lose faith on humans is a sin; and it is indeed a sin of the greatest magnitude to lose faith in the young ones. Not that the great Rabindranath and Nazrul were the only ones who sang the ode to the youth; virtually all the great writers did it. Rabindranath had placed on the young the responsibility to awaken the half-dead by hitting them hard. This approach is not limited only amongst writers and creators of art; rather all the celebrated leaders and statesmen in the world had always looked forward to the youth for them to bring welfare to the State. For, they knew it for certain that it is only the young people who could create new things and give the society a new face; that the real image of a creator is reflected in the youth. It is by no standards an overstatement, I am sure. The achievements listed in the opening paragraph of this article bear testimony to the evident participation and supreme sacrifices of the youth in reaching those milestones. It is the element of dedication of the young people in materializing their dreams that I fondly depend upon, that I cherish to have my confidence in. It was for this same element of their dedication that we had been fortunate to witness in the initial phases of our great Language Movement.

Let us discuss the subject in some more detail. Whenever we talk about the Language Movement, most of us tend to travel straight to the 21st of February, 1952, and begin singing the

ever vibrant tune from Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury. Yet, many of us do not know that the history of the movement traces far deeper. In fact, the debate on the prospective language of the future state of Pakistan began even before Partition of India. While Professor Mohammad Ziauddin, then Vice Chancellor of Aligarh University, demanded that Urdu be the State Language of Pakistan, Dr Mohammad Shahidullah argued in favor of adopting the mother tongue of the majority as one of the State Languages. Fifty six percent of the population of the whole of Pakistan - meaning those living in the then East Bengal or East Pakistan - used to speak Bangla.

So, what happened after the partition? We witnessed a glowing demonstration of the revolt and resolve of the youth on matters of language just within six months of the creation of Pakistan. The backdrop was in Karachi, where the Constituent Assembly was in session on 23 February 1948. It was decided that the House would have a debate on 25 February on what language would be used as the medium for the Assembly deliberations.

In fact, the Language Movement was ignited on the 25th of February 1948. In the debate that day, Dhirendranath Dutt, a congress lawmaker from Comilla, proposed that Bangla be included alongside English and Urdu as a medium of House deliberations.

Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan sharply opposed the motion and branded Dhirendranath Dutt in foul names like Indian agent and separatist. But Dhirendranath Dutt remained unperturbed; and was constrained to take his innocent move, gradually, to the ultimate course of a move for state Language. The rest was just History.

Let us refocus on the youngsters. It may occur to some of us that the full credit of the language episode belonged to Dhirendranath Dutt, then 63. When, after playing that extraordinary role in support of the mother language he returned to Dhaka, another unique spectacle was staged at the Tejgaon Airport. Dhirendranath Dutt himself tells us, "I returned from Karachi after the first Constituent Assembly session. Security at the

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