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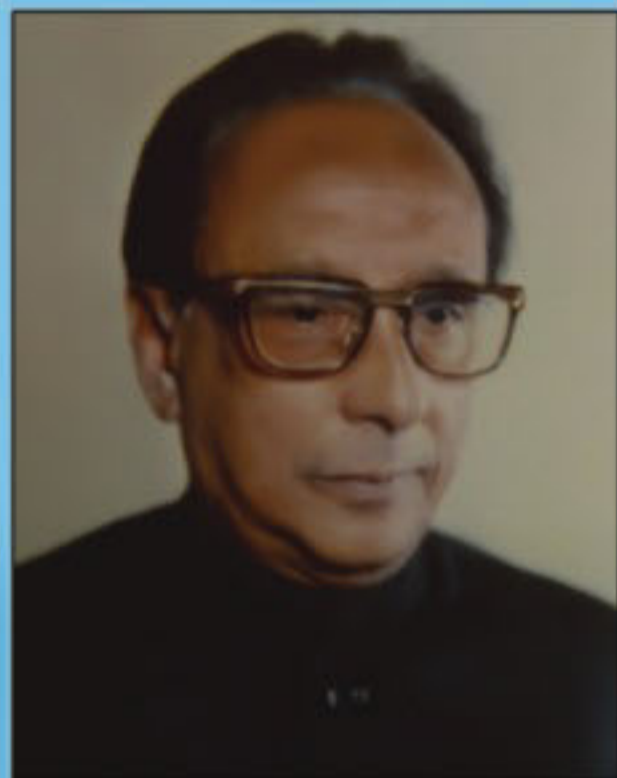
NATIONAL CHILDREN DAY

Homage on the auspicious day of birth of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman



Special Supplement

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بنسٴ مولانا ابراهيم الرحمان



PRESIDENT  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH

Message

On the occasion of his 90th Birth Anniversary, I pay my deep homage to the glorious memory of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This day is also being observed as the 'National Children Day' across the country. On this day, I convey my heartfelt felicitations to the children of Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest son of all times, was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj district on 17 March 1920. Bangabandhu, the undisputed leader, raised his voice for achieving the rights of Bengalee Nation from his early age. He led the nation in every movement towards attaining democracy and autonomy including '52's Language Movement, '54's Jukta-Front Election, movement against Martial Law in '58, '66's Six- Point Movement and '69's Mass Uprising. During the Pakistani regime, he was sent to jail several times and bore inhuman sufferings for the cause of his stern stance in favour of self-independence of our people. Responding to his clarion call, the countrymen participated in the War of Liberation in 1971 and earned the long-cherished Independence through nine-month long armed struggle. Therefore, the name of Bangabandhu has been imprinted in letters of gold in the history of Bengalee Nation.

It is our foremost duty to build our young generation with the noble spirit of patriotism so that they can lead the nation towards prosperity and materialise the cherished dream of Bangabandhu building the country as 'Sonar-Bangla' (Golden Bengal). Let us put our sincere endeavour to bloom the noble qualities and intrinsic values of our children from their childhood so that they can love our country and respect the people acquiring the noble qualities of ideal citizens. We have to inspire the young generation with the deep sense of patriotism, cherished by Bangabandhu throughout his life.

Bangladesh is one of the signatories of the UN Child Rights Convention and our Government is pledged to protect and preserve the rights of children. I urge upon all irrespective of party affiliation to work unitedly for building a happy and prosperous nation.

I pray for the salvation of the departed soul of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his Birth Anniversary.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Z Rahman.

Md. Zillur Rahman

The Southern Door of Memory  
Sheikh Hasina

The Tungipara village of Gopalganj district once stood beside the river Modhumati. Madhumati has now shifted a long distance. Today the Baigar river, which is a tributary of Modhumati, flows alongside Tungipara village with its waves dancing in a rhythmic fashion. The water of that river shines like silver when the sunlight strikes or the moonlight falls on its water.

Along the river-bank were forests of common reed, fields of paddy-jute-sugarcane, lines of date-palmyra-coconut-myrobalan trees, bushes of bamboo and banana, jungles of wild-creepers, fresh tips of long and thin, green and tall grasses. Overall, it was like a wonderfully pleasure-giving piece of picture. I was born in this Tungipara village on an Ashwin noon illuminated by the golden rays of sun. I grew up under the shadow of this village, its enchanting natural beauty and the sweetness of a simple and ordinary life.

Our settlement was over two hundred years old. The buildings which were constructed before the Sepoy Revolution still exist. Our relatives live there. But most of these have broken down, becoming den of snakes. Our ancestors had tussles with the indigo landlords. Cases were instituted. There were also frequent quarrels with the British folks. Once, a British gentleman was fined in a case. That broken building still remains as a silent witness of history. The Pakistani army had attacked that building during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971. They burnt it with fire after keeping my grand parents sitting on the front-road.

It then took seventeen hours to go to our village by steamer from Dhaka. There were no roads. The only option was to go by boat or on feet. Even then, that village had a great attraction for me. One can, however, travel by surface transport now. Keeping pace with time, speed-boats are also available now for the journey. It took 3 to 4 hours to reach Tungipara from Gopalganj by boat.

The colourful and dreamlike days of my childhood were spent on the soft alluvial soil of rural Bengal amid its muddy water during monsoon, in the sweet sunlight, smell of dewdrops falling on grass-flowers and leaves, the sound of crickets at dusks lit by fireflies, hide and seek in the bushes of palmyra and mangosteen trees, sewing of garlands after collecting water-lilies (from ponds) and scented white flowers ('shiuili' and 'bakul'), getting covered by mud and playing in the monsoon rain.

My father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was involved in politics. He was then imprisoned in jails most of the time. I and my younger brother Kamal used to live with our mother at the village home of our grandparents. My father used to study at Kolkata and simultaneously engage in politics during the time of my birth. He came to see me after getting the news later on.

My father used to come home whenever there was time and opportunity. We never moved from his side during those episodes. By listening to stories while sitting on his lap and eating together, what we got from him during childhood seemed enough to me.

One day when papa was brought to Gopalganj police station, I and Kamal went to see him along with our grandfather. Kamal was in fact born when my father was in Dhaka jail. He therefore had not yet seen father from a close range. He used to listen spellbound to the stories I told him about papa. We were standing beside a pond near the Gopalganj jail to have a glimpse of dad just when he would be taken to the court. Kamal stood by my side and said: Hasu'pa, will you allow me to call your papa 'papa'? This sentiment of Kamal could never be erased from the depth of my childhood heart. We rarely got our father during our childhood and teenage years. As we were deprived of his affection during childhood, we got much of it from our grandparents, relatives and village-folks.

The moulati, pundit and teacher for the family-members were resident at our home. All children in the household used to receive education from them in the mornings and evenings. I also studied for some days at the primary school of our village. I maintained close links with the village even while my teenage years were spent in town. I first came to Dhaka with my grandfather in 1952, aboard our own boat. My affectionate grandparents and relatives mostly stayed in the village. I went back to village three or four times in a year during our school holidays or other occasions. Even today, the rural setting and my childhood years there makes me very nostalgic.

My childhood days still evoke many memories. Today, recollections of those times are sweeping my mind over and over again, as if by opening the southern door of memory. I cannot help mention an incident here. A cousin sister of my father was 3 to 4 years older than me. One day, all children in the household were going to school with that



aunt. There was a bamboo bridge over the canal. We had to cross that bridge. On the first day, I was terrified by the experience. My hand and feet were trembling. It was my aunt who gave me courage and helped me cross the bridge by holding my hand. After that, I never became fearful. Rather, I used to remain ahead of the bunch.

After getting up very early at dawn, we children used to roam around on the river-bank; making my feet wet in warm river-water during winters also attracted me. We used to swim by floating pairs of coconuts or banana trees and caught small fishes by spreading the towel in water. Water-hyacinths came to the canal during monsoon. When we pulled these up, small fishes came out of them. One day, I was shocked to see a snake instead.

During the month of Boishakh, we cut fresh mangoes into pieces, mixed those with mustard paste and green chillies and then filled the cones of banana leaves with those; the joy we derived by sipping this juicy paste still thrills me. Anybody who has not tasted this mango paste after putting it inside banana leaf cannot appreciate its taste. And its very smell became different after it was put inside the leaf. We picked up so many quarrels centring on eating mango in this manner. We also competed with each other in eating plum after shaking its tree-branches. There was a huge plum tree beside

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بنسٴ مولانا ابراهيم الرحمان



PRIME MINISTER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message



On the 90th birth anniversary of the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I offer my deepest homage to his sacred memory. I convey my best wishes to each and every child and citizen of the country.

Bangabandhu's love for children was boundless. That was the reason to declare the date of birth of Bangabandhu as National Children Day. On this great day I pray to Almighty Allah for the salvation of the departed soul of the Father of the Nation, and wish a bright future for children who are the future leaders of the nation.

From his childhood Bangabandhu possessed indomitable courage and intelligence. Bangabandhu had since been endowed with leadership qualities, his independent spirit and political consciousness enabled him to give fearless leadership to the nation. Starting from the language movement, Bangabandhu in his long political career championed the cause of the Bengalees always being in the forefront. That is the reason why he has become our Father of the Nation. Bangladesh emerged due to his indisputable leadership and the bangalee nationhood was bloomed. He was the emblem of the exploited humanity in their fight to earn their rights and freedom.

But it was most unfortunate that the moment when he had devoted himself to the task of rebuilding the independent Bangladesh, he, along with his family members, was killed on 15 August 1975. Through this conspiratorial killing by the anti-liberation forces, the onward march of democracy and country's development was abruptly halted. In such process, the anti-liberation war criminals were rehabilitated and the people were deprived of food and right of franchise. The rule of law and constitution remained suppressed. Distortion of history and culture of lies continued unabated.

The trial of the killers of the Father of the Nation and implementation of court's judgement have unburdened the nation at least to some extent. Government has taken initiative to bring back the rest of the convicts to execute the court verdict.

Today I urge the children to know their dear motherland and the real history of the struggling career of the Father of the Nation. The guardians, I hope, shall inspire their children in building their character, inculcate self confidence and to study the real history in order to develop patriotism in them.

On this day of the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation and National Children Day, I urge all to achieve Sonar Bangla, the dream of Bangabandhu and make Bangladesh a safe abode for children through collective endeavour of all patriotic citizens.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina

A Birthday and Dream of Million Children  
Selina Hossain

Today is the ninetieth birthday of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This day has been declared as National Children's Day. This date of birth of the Father of the Nation is the symbolic day of development of millions of children. They shall mature with the knowledge of sacrifice made by the architect of our country's liberation, his courage and love for humanity, they shall prepare themselves with the knowledge of authentic history of their country and shall remain pledge-bound to zealously maintain the true perception of history. In our concern for the country and the nation, the birthday of the Father of the Nation is a historically significant day as it encompasses the gradual development of our children.

Bangabandhu was born in a charming rural village, Tungipara. Madhumati river flowed by the side of this village in Gopalganj district. Since his early days, he was acquainting himself with its nature, and its abjectly poor people. In the magnificence of nature's unending horizon, he had gained the dedication to transform his home country into a place of honour and glory. He realised home country is much more than a territory, she needs to be projected with dignity, her people should be given a wider space to live, and their struggle to uphold their right must not be compromised. Poverty is not the last word in a man's life. Man may be poor, but he must not be lacking in human dignity. Human rights must be granted to him, he should have a rightful place in the society, for which a society based on social justice is obligatory. A knowledge-based social structure tempered with democratic values is the essential prerequisite to run a country. Bangabandhu had all along been conscious of his obligations towards his own country.

Since his childhood, two elements remained uppermost in his psyche, one: love for his people, and two: alertness to obtain people's rights. Once, while he was returning home from school he gave his warm clothes to a friend who was shivering in cold, on another occasion he gave his new umbrella to his poor school-mate who was going to school completely drenched in rain water. These incidents, however, trivial might seem, they helped him in his early days to understand in his own way the miseries prevailing in the society. He learnt to attend to the basic needs of a person. It indeed is urgent that the children of the present Bangladesh grow with human sensibilities. Following the life of this noble personality, the family, society and state have a responsibility to develop the character of our children imbued with moral values.

Bangabandhu in his speech which he delivered at the Ramna Green on January 4, 1971 said, 'The Bengalees, particularly the students and the youth, need to know our history and legacy in clear terms. A boy of Bengal who does not know the legacy of his forefathers, he remains a stranger to becoming a true Bengalee. Till now, the glorious history of Bangladesh is yet to be written. I call upon our educationists to write anew the history of the Bengalees so that our future generations may feel proud in the knowledge of their glorious past and stand erect with their heads high.'

Here, to recall, when Bangabandhu was a student of the Gopalganj Mission School, the Chief Minister of Bengal, Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq and Cabinet Minister Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy together came to visit the school. As they, accompanied by the Head Master of the school, were leaving the school on completion of their visit,

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Bangabandhu: Hero of People's Politics  
Abul Momen

A crisis of morality was inevitable in a country which was founded on riots and partition, expulsions and occupations, jealousy and conspiracy. Bangabandhu had confronted the politics of palace intrigues in Pakistan, which was hostile towards the Bengalees. The politics of conspiracy is enacted behind curtains and the politics of compromise is conducted with cleverness. Bangabandhu had struck at the fortress of power in Pakistan in a direct manner. It was he who had involved the masses in Pakistani politics, salvaged the mainstream politics from evil influences and brought it into the domain of the general masses. The six-points were his political charter. The united people were his soldiers and the fighting spirit of the masses was his inspiration for moving forward.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman subsequently became Bangabandhu, Father of the Nation, and architect of an independent Bangladesh. On the one hand, he achieved the unparalleled reputation of a self-sacrificing, bold and resilient leader in our political arena in the face of tortures meted out by the Pakistanis after the announcement of six-points. On the other hand, by finding such a leader before them, a divided, lazy and quarrelsome nation swiftly underwent an amazing revolutionary transformation. They became united behind a single leader with the objective of achieving independence; they became courageous by shaking off their cowardice and hesitation and were rejuvenated by the noble inspiration of self-sacrifice for the sake of the country and the nation. Bangabandhu's 7 March speech provided directions to the whole nation, reinvigorated them for achieving a common goal and inspired them to join an independence war, if needed, even by risking their lives. This speech was like a life-infusing wand, it transformed an ancient and dormant nation into a self-sacrificing and revolutionary one. Not only in the history of Bangla, such a turn of events had never taken place in world history. That is why, he remains the greatest national leader in the thousand-year old history of the Bengalees.

With him in the centre, many leaders played pivotal roles in the Awami League after emerging from the educated middle-class and lower middle-class of society. The Awami League became the party of the educated Bengalees and common people of rural Bengal. Bangabandhu's Awami League became a platform for the freedom-seeking Bengalees irrespective of their religions, colours, gender and location. Bengalee nationalism was the principal current in the mass upsurge which was spawned from 1966; Awami League was the name of the boat which sailed on it by taking in all and sundry; and its skipper was Mujib.

The mind of such a great man was like a child; his personality was simple; his movements were unostentatious. The conspirators took advantage of his liberality; the defeated forces were desperate to hit back after seeing the certainty of progress by the Bengalees and Bangladesh under his leadership. The band of enemies and conspirators killed him in August 1975; they wanted to halt the forward-march of a modern and humane Bangladesh by eliminating his family including women and children. After that, Bangladesh had to traverse a dark path for a long time. The people lost their directions because of the aberrations of backwardness and the militancy of blind faith.

In the meantime, Bangabandhu's daughter had taken up the mantle of her father's work. By treading her father's footsteps, she pledged to free politics from the clutches

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