



# 26 March The Glorious Independence & National Day



Special Supplement

Saturday 26 March 2011

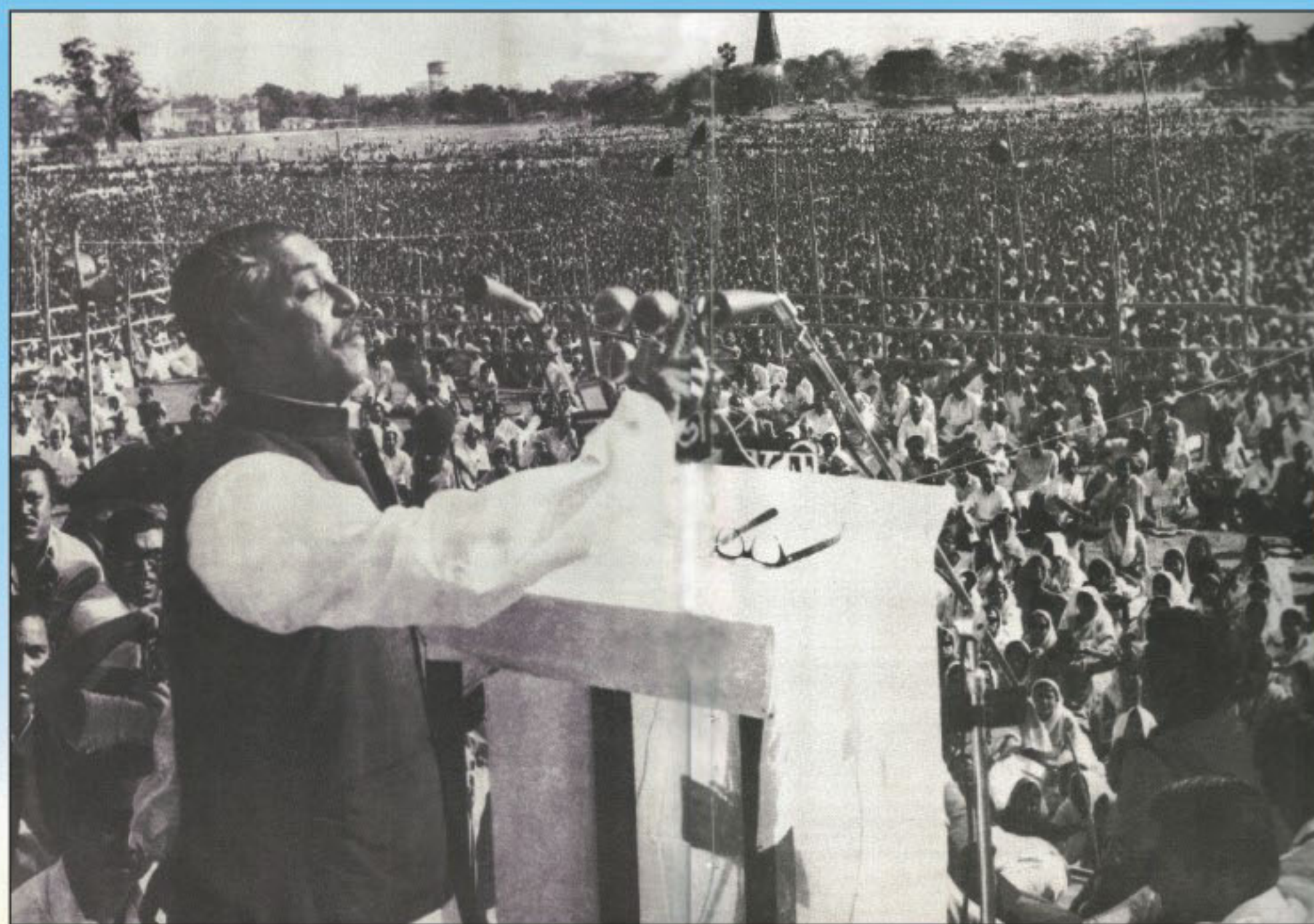
Art & Design : Department of Films & Publications ♦ Assistance : Press Information Department, Ministry of Information

## Expectations on the Occasion of Four Decades of Bangladesh's Independence H T Imam

March 26 is the most important day in the history of Bangladesh. It was the inaugural day of an auspicious journey traversed by the Bengalee nation. March 26 of 1971 was the day of achieving independence by the exploited, deprived, repressed and tortured Bengali-speaking people of the eastern wing of former Pakistan. It was the day of roaring back at the military rulers of Pakistan in order to free oneself from various dubious techniques of exploitation-deprivation and suppression. March 26 of 1971 was the most sacred and memorable day in the life of the Bengalee nation. The Bengalee nation had to sacrifice innumerable precious lives for attaining this exalted day.

Following the termination of British rule in 1947, the Indian subcontinent was divided into two states on the basis of two-nation theory. One of these was Pakistan. The then East Pakistan or East Bengal was located at a distance of one thousand mile from West Pakistan. Its people possessed a distinct culture, social customs and separate language. They had to wage movements from the very inception of Pakistan against its one-eyed policies. This struggle was directed towards attainment of freedom for the Bengalee nation. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the greatest hero of that epic struggle for the liberation of Bangla, which was crafted in 24 years between 1947 and 1971. After a long struggle, the Bengalee people irrespective of religion or colour became united in 1971 under the leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It was a glorious chapter in the annals of Bangladesh.

The communal military rulers of West Pakistan started to dilly-dally on the question of handing over power of the whole of Pakistan to Awami League chief Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of the Bengalees, who had won majority seats in the general election. At the instigation of the ring-leader of evil forces in West Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the military clique of General Yahya unleashed an armed assault with heavy weaponry against the unarmed and innocent Bengalee civilians on the night of



25 March 1971. They carried out indiscriminate genocide. General Yahya had deceived Bangabandhu in the name of talks. Soon after the start of the military campaign, Bangabandhu was arrested by the Pakistani forces at 1.30 a.m. after midnight. Before his arrest, he sent out the following message to Chittagong through the wireless transmitter of the then East Pakistan Rifles for publicising it all over East Bengal:

"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." [Bangalir Kantha, Agamee Prokashani]

The declaration of independence cannot be a matter of a moment or a day. The question of a nation's life or death is involved with its independence. The very survival of the Bengalee nation was therefore related to the achievement of Bangladesh's independence. At the beginning of this article, I have dwelt very briefly on the attitude and activities of the military rulers of West Pakistan towards the Bengalee people of East Bengal. It is necessary here to add a few more themes for the sake of our future generation. The movement for an end to British colonial rule included the establishment of Muslim League in 1906 and the Lahore Resolution of 1940. The leaders of East Bengal made notable contributions to these developments. After the partition of the subcontinent, the colossal defeat of the Muslim League in the 1954 election of Pakistan could not be concealed through the promulgations of martial law in 1958 and 1969; similarly, the movement for self-determination of the Bengalee nation could not be suppressed by the Pakistani rulers. The reasons which I ascribe to such circumstances included the colonial attitude of the West Pakistani

(Contd. on next page)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



PRIME MINISTER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH



### Message

"I convey my heartiest greetings to my countrymen as well as to all expatriate Bangalees on the occasion of the great Independence and National Day 2011.

The greatest Bengalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh through the wireless of the then EPR at the first hour of March the 26<sup>th</sup> in 1971 when Pakistani occupation forces launched genocide on unarmed Bangalees on the fatal night of the 25<sup>th</sup> March, 1971. With the proclamation, a sovereign, independent state, Bangladesh has come into being in the world map. After a 9-month of bloody war under the brave and dauntless leadership of Bangabandhu, we earned the ultimate victory on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1971.

On this glorious day, I pay my homage to the three million heroic sons, who sacrificed their lives, and 200 thousand women, who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation.

I recall with deep gratitude the great leader of our liberation struggle, the greatest Bengalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

I also pay my humble tribute to the four national leaders Tajuddin Ahmed, Syed Najrul Islam, Capt M Monsur Ali and AHM Kamrujjaman, who led the war under the directive of Bangabandhu.

I pay my homage to the valiant freedom fighters, and my sincere sympathy goes to the wounded war veterans.

My sympathy also goes to those who had lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture and subjugation during the war. I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their whole-hearted support and cooperation for the cause of our liberation.

On the eve of our Independence Day, I urge the countrymen to remain alert against the conspiracies of anti-democratic forces. The defeated anti-liberation, communal and identified reactionary forces are out to undo the democratic and development process of our beloved country as our government has taken steps to start the trial of war criminals. I urge the countrymen to foil all ill-designed plots against the country and the people.

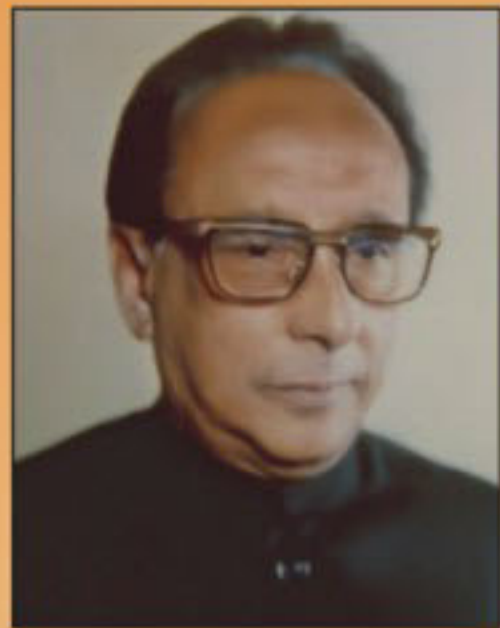
The independence earned through huge bloodbath and sacrifice is our greatest achievement. To make this achievement meaningful, we have to devote ourselves in nation-building activities being imbued with the spirit of our great liberation war. By cherishing the true history of our liberation war close to our hearts, we have to go ahead in achieving the objective of the 'charter of change'. The new generation has to be enlightened with the true history of our Liberation War.

We have been striving hard to establish Bangladesh as a poverty, hunger and illiteracy-free, progressive and democratic country by 2021, the Golden Jubilee year of our independence. I call upon every Bengalee to join this noble endeavour with their utmost sincerity, honesty and dedication being inspired with the spirit of patriotism.

With our united efforts, Insha-Allah, we would surely achieve our 'Golden Bangladesh' as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu  
May Bangladesh Live Forever

Sheikh Hasina



بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



PRESIDENT  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH

### Message

On the occasion of our great Independence and National Day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the countrymen living at home and abroad.

The historic Independence Day is a glorious day in our national life. We achieved our long-cherished independence through nine month long armed struggle and supreme sacrifices of millions. On this solemn day, I pay my deep homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the war of liberation in 1971. I pray to the Almighty for the salvation of those departed immortal souls.

On this very memorable day, I recall with profound respect the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed country's Independence on March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call the courageous people from all walks of life participated in the war of liberation and achieved victory through armed struggle. I also recall with deep respect our four National Leaders; valiant freedom-fighters and organisers who rendered their dedicated efforts and enthusiastic support that accelerated the achievement of our victory. I also remember with deep respect the contributions of late Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haque, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani towards inspiring our people at various stages of struggle. The contributions of those valiant sons of the soil would be ever written in the history of our independence.

One of the prime objectives of our hard-earned independence was to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. Keeping that in mind, the Government is rendering untiring efforts in materialising the objectives of independence. With the span of time, we have achieved some significant progresses in the field of agriculture, education, health, rural infrastructure, communication, ICT, youth, women and children, women empowerment etc. at national level. The Government is also very sincere to establish Rule of Law, Human Rights in the country and institutionalise democracy. Our achievement at international arena is also notable. Despite attaining the progress, we have to go a long way for achieving the desired goals of independence. I believe concerted efforts from all are imperative in this regard.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the people of our country are democracy-loving. Without making institutionalisation of democracy, the overall development is hard to attain. Tolerance, fortitude and respectful to other's opinion are the pre-conditions for flourishing democracy. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to maintain patience, forbearance at all level and to be respectful to other's opinion in a democratic pluralism. Let us make our National Parliament as a centre of excellence in solving our national issues through discussion. I am confident, all irrespective of party affiliation would play responsible role in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of our common people by playing their due role.

The present Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has declared 'Vision 2021' with a view to attaining 'Golden Bangla' dream by Bangabandhu. I believe people from all strata of life would contribute to build an IT-based happy and prosperous Bangladesh by materialising the 'Vision' at the Golden Jubilee of independence in 2021.

On this Independence Day, I urge all, living at home and abroad, to work unitedly imbued with the spirit of war of liberation to expedite economic self-reliance and democratic advancement as we are committed to building a respectful, happy and prosperous Bangladesh for our next generation.

May the Almighty be with us.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Zillur Rahman

## Scattered thoughts on Independence Day

Prof Panna Kaiser

Months like February, March or December strike a raw nerve in me. A kaleidoscope of the past makes me reflect on events that are both happy and sad. On February 21, 1952, Bengali nation began its pursuit of freedom, which saw blood in every twists and turns. The man who made the clarion call is none other than Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the epic figure with unrivaled vigour. The father of the nation guided his people with his clear vision, supplied them with indomitable courage and gave them the much needed self-esteem. He gave the nation the belief that their freedom fighters could beat the enemies and earn freedom at the shortest possible time. He ignited the fire in every soul that burnt the Pak army and force them to retreat. These are instances that give birth to stories of pride and that strengthen our national conscience.

March is here once again. The month of pride is here. The fiery March, the month of struggle and resistance, is here. The polls in 1970 gave landslide victory to Bangabandhu. Bengali nation was jubilant. It dreamt of the day when Bangabandhu would lead the whole Pakistan. He would become the Premier and end the tale of deprivation and oppression. Yahya would yield power in favour of Bangabandhu at the National Council on March 1. The wait for the august moment was tinged with anxious anticipation. The light at the end of the tunnel seemed within reach when Bengali would have access to privileges and rights that it had long been denied.

Bangabandhu's ascension to power excited our thoughts. The dream of Golden Bengal seemed so near. Bengali nation braced for the bliss of joy that would come on March 1. Yahya dampened all excitement in one radio message. Yahya's message spread like bushfire. Road 32 of Dhanmondi became the foothold of freedom. The evil conspiracies of Yahya became obvious to Bangabandhu; the call for non-cooperation came immediately. The whole nation became ready to make the utmost sacrifices, responding to the call of one man. Meeting, rally, demonstration rocked the scene. Personally, I don't know of any speech that has the magical motivational vigor of March 7. The leader declared, "This time, the struggle is for independence. This time, the struggle is for freedom." I had the rare privilege of attending the rally in which Bangabandhu united an otherwise deprived nation, urging them to move forward in the path of freedom.

The incidents that followed were however heinous to say the least. The Pak army unleashed terror on March 26, torching houses, killing the

multitude. The city became a heap of carcass. The freedom fighters crossed the border to equip themselves for an armed struggle. Bangabandhu was arrested on March 25 and was taken to a prison in Pakistan. Bangabandhu knew the fire of freedom that he had ignited would show the freedom fighters the way to freedom. They carried the fire in their hearts and turned it into strength. His message relayed from Kalurghat Radio Station added significant meaning to the message. The freedom fighters vowed for ultimate freedom of the country and braced for ultimate sacrifice.

The month of Independence has returned after forty years. In this month, stories throng upon stories, pictures throng upon memories to tell and retell the bloodbath that gave birth to the crimson rose of Independence. We remember this day with pride and sorrow. Bleeding hearts cry for freedom—O Freedom, where art thou! There is a gulf of difference between March 1972 and March 2011. Why do I wroth the hour by becoming sad instead of becoming proud? Have the dreams of the dead been realized? Shame casts its shadow.

Bangabandhu dreamt of bringing an end to the misery of the wage-laborer and of the peasants. He wanted to produce men of golden hearts in the land that itself is golden. These golden men were his greatest weapon in his effort to revamp the war-ravaged country. He needed to mobilize support at a global level. He devoted himself to the making the country from the scratch. Bangabandhu, the patriotism-incarnate, maintained: "The struggle this time is to uphold the sovereignty of the nation with dignity and to create a society sans oppression." In another rally, he said: "Why did you join the war? For yourself or for the deprived? You wanted to create a state without oppression. You wanted freedom through a socialist ideology."

Unfortunately, the intricate web of intrigues caught Bangabandhu off-

guard. Those who were involved in conspiracy were very close to him. Bangabandhu lost his life along with almost all other family members. His residence on Road 32, which used to be a site for political pilgrim, became the site of a brutal murder. The death hung like petrified pain and it suspended all the dreams that were once perceived by the father of the nation.

The political compass changed its direction. Civil dictatorship strangled democracy to death. The history of the liberation war was misrepresented to confuse the new generation. The hard-earned

constitution was ratified at the whim of the political masters. Indemnity Act was passed to protect the murderers.

The celebration of Independence Day became ceremonial—without any real passion and determination. The glorious sun of March was not allowed to shine on the glory of independence. The long wait began, with hope for the return of democracy.

Bengali nation took the hard path of struggle to snatch the robbed democracy. The



daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Hasina returned to Bangladesh as a savior figure. She fluttered high scepter of truth. With her return on May 17, 1981 the journey towards democracy began. The rugged road of the tyrant could not stop her from siding with the freedom loving people of

(Contd. on next page)