

17 March

NATIONAL CHILDREN DAY

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

Special Supplement

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



### Message

On the occasion of the 92nd Birth Anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I pay my deep homage to the memory of this great leader. On this day, I also convey my heartfelt felicitations to the children of Bangladesh as this day is being observed as the 'National Children Day' across the country.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the greatest son of all times, was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj district on 17 March 1920. He always nourished Bangla, Bangalee and Bangladesh in his thinking. This undisputed leader raised his voice for achieving the rights of the Bangalee from his early age. He led the nation in every movement towards attaining democracy and autonomy including Language Movement in 1952, Jukta-Front Election in '54, movement against Martial Law in '58, Six-Point Movement in 1966 and Mass Uprising in '69. During the Pakistani regime, he was sent to jail several times and he bore inhuman sufferings for the cause of his active participation and his firm stance in favour of independence of our people. Yet he did not compromise with the Pakistani rulers. Finally, this great leader of the Bangalee declared country's independence on March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, the countrymen from all strata participated in the War of Liberation in 1971 and achieved ultimate victory on December 16, 1971 through nine-month long armed struggle. I believe Bangladesh would not come into being if this great leader was not born. Bangladesh and Bangabandhu is thus synonymous for his immense contributions. Therefore, the name of Bangabandhu would be ever imprinted in letters of gold in our history.

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 dreamt by Bangabandhu for building the country as 'Sonar-Bangla' (Golden Bengal). Let us put our sincere endeavour to flourish the noble qualities and intrinsic values of our children from their very childhood so that they can love our country and people. Let us 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 welcome the initiative to observe the 'National Children Day' on the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu. I urge upon all irrespective of party affiliation to work unitedly for building up a happy and prosperous nation as well as the bright future for our children.

I pray for the salvation of the departed soul of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his 92nd Birth Anniversary.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Zillur Rahman

## The New Generation and Bangladesh

Muhammed Zafar Iqbal

Two children are going to school with hands around each other's shoulder. They have fully loaded bags of books on their back; they are looking around with big round eyes; they are talking with waving their hands. I do not know if there is any sight on earth which is more beautiful than this. It does not matter at all whether they are from affluent family and well-dressed or they are from poor family and shabbily dressed. The appearance of such little kids makes us feel happy.

On the other hand, when we see a car has stopped at the traffic lights with a little girl in it in school uniform while another girl of same age is trying to sell flowers at the window of the same car, then we turn away our faces with a long sigh - we pretend as if we haven't seen the sight. When will we have a Bangladesh where at school time all the children, all the adolescents will attend this or that school.

We raise storm in tea-cups over issues like the Padma bridge, we have debates on flyovers, we show such interest in new industries, we have huge tension over political situation, we have agitation over stock market debacle. But hundred times more important than all these are sending all the children to schools at school time, who can deny such a truth? I dream of a day when during school time no children will be found anywhere - not on streets-ghats-fields-rivers, shops-markets, mills-factories nor at homes but only at schools. Not necessarily all the children will be admitted to the high standard aristocratic schools but definitely in any of the schools. When a school closes for the day, many of them will perhaps hold plough in the field, some will go to the



Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman amidst the children on his birthday at Ganabhaban premises

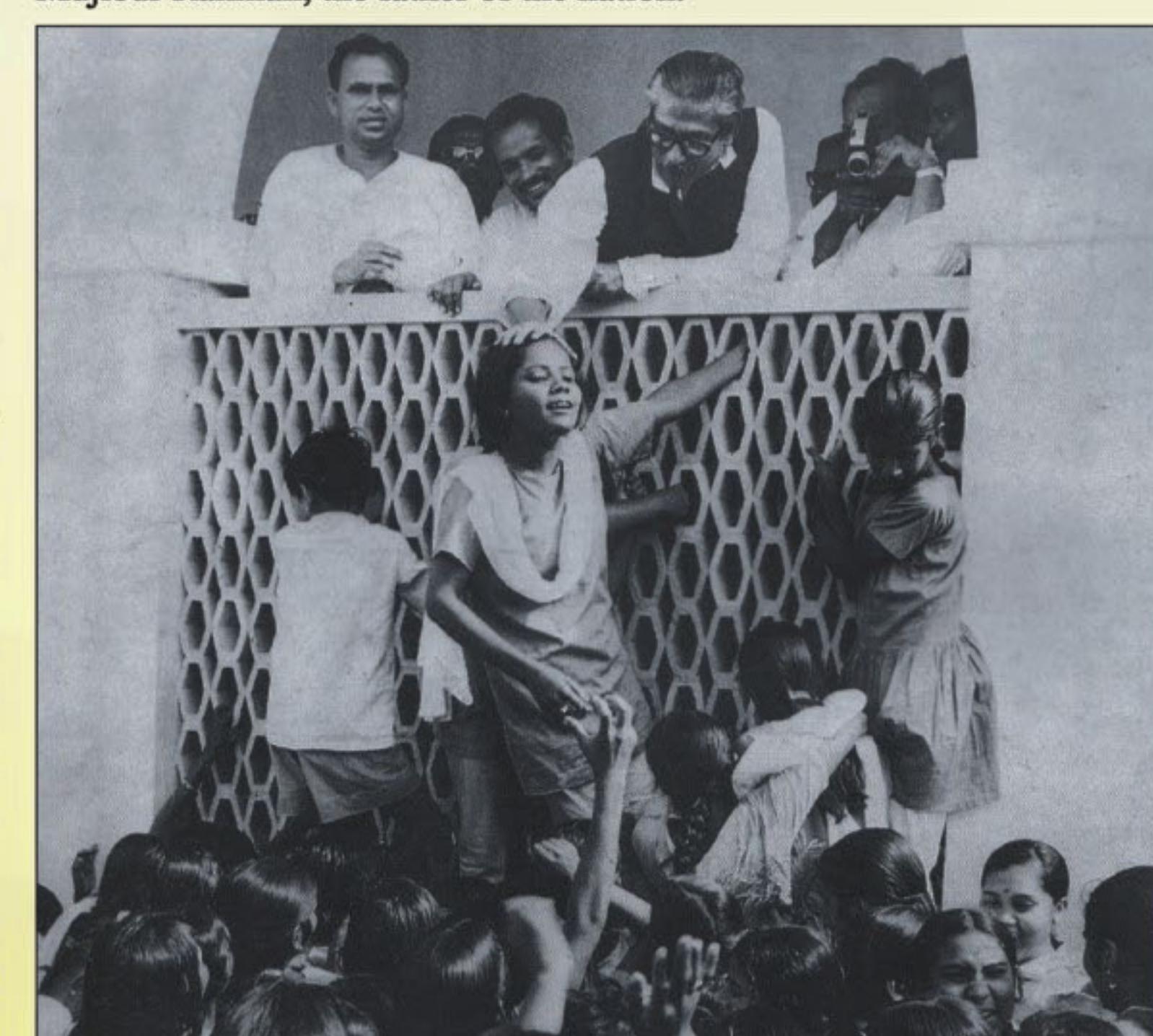
river with the fishing net, some will run lathe machines or sell newspapers on the streets, some will be helpers of tempo, sew garments in garment factories or do household works - but at school time throughout the whole country not a single child or not a single adolescent shall be found anywhere other than schools. Is this dream unrealistic? Perhaps the government alone cannot make this happen at this moment but if every individual takes the responsibility of their own locality, can't we together make it happen?

We know that we haven't yet been able to make our schools interesting. Still children are used to cramming and obsessed with the guide books and coaching centers. Still we have monstrous teachers torturing the little kids physically. Yet we have reasons to be optimistic. Now as a result of change in the question and evaluation pattern, the students can answer only 10% of the total questions in the examination by rote learning - for the rest, they have to use their logic and ideas. (Since the thing is new, everyone has not been able to cope with it, guide books for creative pattern questions are already available in market and many children are being forced to read them. But

(See Page-28)

its people. He sacrificed his whole life for the sake of the country. His proverbial sacrifice, indomitable courage, amazing leadership, magical organizing skills, and above all his capacity to incite dreams allowed him to unify millions of people to share and pursue one dream and to jump into a struggle for its ultimate realization.

The little boy Khoka from the remote village Tungipara is Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation.



Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with the students of a school in Rangpur

He was born on March 17, 1920. His father was Sheikh Lutfur Rahman and his mother Saira Khatun. In Bangladesh he is lovingly known as Bangabandhu.

Bangabandhu had a large heart. He was known for his generosity. During a personal visit to Tungipara, Gopalganj, I went to the primary school in Gimapara, to Mathurath Missionary School in Gopalganj, to his father's workplace in the court house of Gopalganj. I have talked to

many people who knew Bangabandhu in person. And stories of his generosity were shared by them all. The other thing that they recalled was of his photogenic memory: Bangabandhu would never forget a face. I heard how Bangabandhu once gave away his kurta-pajama to a man shivering in a cold wintry night, and returned home wrapped only in his shawl. He used to give away rice from the granary; I have heard it from the old who are still grateful of the generosity of Bangabandhu.

When he was still a student at Mathurath Missionary School in Gopalganj, the chief minister of undivided Bengal Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haq along with Hossain Shahid Surwary came for an inspection. The school had a leaky roof. When the ministers were about to leave, Bangabandhu with some of his friends waylaid them and said, "What would happen to the dripping water from the roof?" Sher-e-Bangla instantly sanctioned Tk. 1200 for the repair-job and met Mujib at his bungalow where he appreciated his courage.

After 1947 Bangabandhu moved to Dhaka and became vocal against various irregularities of the then Muslim League government. As early as 1948, he wanted to secure the status of Bangla as a state language. The people's council at Karachi decided to have Urdu as an official language along with English. Councilor Dhiren Dutt of Comilla brought an amendment bill, stating Bangla to be one of the parliamentary languages; after all, the majority of the people in Pakistan were Bengali speakers. The norms of democracy tell us that the official language should be the language that is most widely used. Still the Bengali wanted Bangla to be not the only but one of the state languages. Even such democratic proposal was rejected by the regime, and the amendment Bill of Dhiren Dutt was annulled.

Sheikh Mujib brought out a rally in protest at Dhaka University, demanding Bangla as a state language. On March 11, 1948 a hartal was called, and the authority clamped Section 144. On the eve of the hartal, Mujib at a student gathering declared his decision to violate 144; others agreed. The next day while demonstrating for hartal, Mujib was arrested from the street in front of the Secretariat.

Mujib got arrested several times for voicing out against oppression and speaking for people's rights, but arrests did not deter him from doing what he felt was right.

Let me tell a story of how courageous the once rickety boy had become at the age of 28. His imprisonment for Bangla language is already told. He was no stranger to police arrest; the stories of Hamid Master that he grew up with had inculcated a sense of freedom that made him think like nationalist heroes such as Khudiram, Shurja Sen and the like.

(See Page-28)

## The Way the Little Boy Grew Up

Anisul Haq

He was called Khoka when he was a child. Khoka was quite skinny. His father was a good football player. Khoka used to join his father to the field; but he was too rickety to kick the ball. His little feet would kick the ball, but the only thing that moved was the tiny kicker himself.

As a young man, however, Khoka turned out to be a footballer of some repute in Tungipara. People would hire him to play matches. Tungipara is a village by the River Modhumati, and Khoka's house was near a canal that opened into another river - Baiga. Khoka would be invited to play from places across the river like Chitalmari in Mollarhat, sometimes to play even against the senior team for which his father played.

Khoka nearly lost his eyes to Beriberi as a child. He received a series of treatments that saved his eyes, but since then glasses had become his permanent companion. His eye-related problems stopped him from attending schools for nearly four years. However, it did not stop him from studying at home. The outhouse by the canal lodged tutors like Moulavi Sahib, the Pundit and Hamid Master with whom Khoka had his lessons of Arabic, Bangla, English and Mathematics. Hamid Master was an anti-British rebel who even went to prison for his involvement with the fight for freedom. Hamid Master used to tell Khoka stories of the anti-British movement and the contribution of heroes such as Surja Sen, Titumir and Preetilata.

The little boy who could not even kick a ball turned out to be a strong man with overwhelming courage and strength. Once he confronted a group of ruffians all by himself. This little Khoka had become so great that in 2004, BBC conducted a survey among its audience to find out the greatest Bengali of all time: Khoka topped the list.

The boy, who nearly lost his sight and lost four years of schooling, developed an insight into the partition of India and Pakistan. In 1947, he was a student of Islamia College, Kolkata. "This freedom cannot be true independence," he reflected on the partition. In a closed room meeting with his friends, he added, "We must return to the holy land of Bangladesh and start a fresh struggle for freedom in order to remove the stains tainted by the partition."

This urge for freedom brought him to the University of Dhaka from Kolkata. He had just one dream: the ultimate freedom of his country and