



Special Supplement

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Talking about Independence Day

Anisuzzaman

The appearance of March after February is as inevitable as the materialization of the dream of independence after the language movement, of March 26 after February 21.

Our twenty-four-year long attachment with Pakistan is informed by anxiety and discomfort. From the very inception of Pakistan, East Bengal became subject to deprivation, and our struggle for equal rights began soon after. From that time onward, we steered away from religion-based nationalism to culturally-oriented nationalism. Struggles for self-rule, parliamentary democracy, secular society, equidistribution of national resources left their bloody tracings in years such as 1948, 1950, 1952, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1962, 1966, and 1970. 1948 was not only the beginning of a language movement but also an attempt to preserve Bangalee alphabet, culture and identity. The convention on constitution in 1950 called for the formation of United Socialist States of Pakistan; the self-sacrifice in 1952 in the demand for declaration of Bangla as one of the state languages; the clear mandate of the people in the first ever general election of the province in 1954 and it was nullified by the central government. 1955 saw the omission of "Muslim" from "Awami Muslim League", although the process of the secularization of its politics and its student wing had begun much earlier. The first drafting of constitution of Pakistan in 1956 recognized Bangla as a state language and endorsed a combined parliamentary electoral system for both wings. 1958 witnessed the suspension of civil rights through a clamp-down on military rule. The education movement of 1962 was ultimately a resistance to military rule. In 1966, Sheikh Mujib forwarded the 6-point demand that was central to our existence as people. The mass upheaval of 1969 foiled the conspiratorial Agartala Trial against Sheikh Mujib and his associates, leading to the eventual canonization of Mujib as Bangabandhu. The Central government's negligence in dealing with the aftermath of the tornado that wreaked havoc in 1970 irked the people, and Awami League under the leadership of Bangabandhu had a landslide win in the national election of 1970.

The politicians and a large segment of the civil-military bureaucracy of Pakistan never wanted to give its Eastern wing its right share. It is no surprise then that the outcome of the 1970 polls caused worries for them. The way they indulged in giving lie to people's verdict



as well as to all basic norms of democracy is unmatched in history. Bangabandhu's assurance that he would not pursue six-point demands as PM did not deter the Pakistanis from hatching conspiracies. The conspirators did not pay any heed to some concerned politicians of West Pakistan who urged the incumbent government to show some respect for democracy. The first session of the national assembly that was supposed to meet on March 3, 1971 was postponed by General Yahya just two days ahead of the meeting. He removed the provincial governor and the chief military administrator and replaced them with two of his lackeys. While on the surface, he continued to have dialogues with Bangabandhu and his associates, he strengthened the military deployment in East Pakistan and prepared the master plan of killing Bangalees under Operation Search Light.

There was a roar of opposition against the annulment of national parliament; internecine clashes between Bangalee and non-Bangalee or between civilians and military officials erupted. There was this huge pressure on Bangabandhu from the students and the people alike to declare independence. Slogans such as: "Wake up, Bangalee! Wake up!" "Brave Bangalee, Pick up your weapons, Free your country from the demons," "Our address is Padma-Meghna-Jamuna," "Joy Bangla" reverberated throughout the country. On March 2, the flag designed by Shivarayn Das was hoisted first at the University of Campus, and then at the Paltan Ground on the following day. Bangabandhu called for general strikes on March 1 and March 3. The strike was later extended up to March 7. The 17-minute speech delivered at Racecourse Ground by Bangabandhu on March 7 is remarkable in every sense of the term. He announced, "Fortify your houses. Garner all weapons that you can to protect yourself against the enemies. Close down everything, even if I am not there to pronounce any further action." He said, "We have spilled blood, and we are ready to spill more. We will fight to free the nation in the name of Allah. The struggle this time is for freedom; the struggle this time is for independence." The speech invigorated everyone and inspired them for the ultimate sacrifice. At a public rally on March 17, Maolana Bhashani stated that Bangabandhu had already declared independence. Almost all the Sector Commanders Major KM Shafullah, Major Ziaur Rahman, Major Khaled Mosharraf, Major Abu Osman Khondhury later admitted that they had taken Bangabandhu's speech as a green signal for the liberation war.

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Thoughts of New Generation Bangladesh is my Pride

Bangladesh then began to fly in the sky of Bangla. The word 'Bangladesh' was then on everybody's tongue. The preparation for an armed war of Independence under the leadership of Awami League was in progress in different places of Bangla.

Our Independence is a result of immense dedication and suffering. We have got this country under the leadership of Bangabandhu. But when Bangabandhu was reconstructing the newly independent war ravaged country, then the enemies of our Independence killed him along with family members. The whole of Bangali nation became orphaned at the death of Bangabandhu. The misrule came back once again through the rise of an undemocratic force in the military garb. This undemocratic force in military uniform spoke about the democracy, but in practice it was employing the word of democracy to induct the non-political people in the politics to exterminate the politics and democracy from Bangladesh for good. Thus the non-political people who were detached from the people and politics came into the politics of Bangladesh after killing of the Father of nation on Aug 15, 1975.

The work of reconstructing the country began in 1996 when Bangladesh Awami League came into power once again after a period of long 21 years. Awami League came back to power for the second time in 2009 under the leadership of the Father of the Nation and rolled out the Vision 2021 for the development of the country as dreamt of by the Father of the Nation. The electoral pledge of the present Awami League government to build the digital Bangladesh at all levels has already got momentum. The dream of national development is thus coming true.

It shall be evaluated how much of the dream of our freedom fighters has been materialized after four decades of our Independence. We have therefore collected views of a number of our youngsters about our country on the occasion of our



بنیرুল الرحمٰن الزعيم

PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
BANGLADESH

Message

March 26 is our great Independence and National Day. On the eve of the day, I convey my heartfelt greetings and felicitations to the fellow 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 of people. 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 souls.

On this very memorable day, I recall with profound respect Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who proclaimed country's independence at the early hours on March 26, 1971. Responding to his clarion call, the 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 who inspired our people at various stages for attaining country's self-sovereignty. 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 materializing 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, SME, youth & sports, women and children, women empowerment, etc. at national level. At the same time we have also attained notable advancement in corporate sector including the area of readymade garments, pharmaceuticals, ceramic and ship-building industry. The Government is also very sincere to establish Rule of Law, Human Rights in the country. Our achievement at international arena is also praiseworthy. Yet, we have to go a long way for achieving the desired goals of independence and building a happy and prosperous Bangladesh. I believe concerted efforts from all strata irrespective of party affiliation are imperative in this regard.

The people of our country are democracy-loving. Without making institutionalization of democracy, the overall development is hard to attain. Tolerance, fortitude and respect 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 Jatiya Sangsad as a centre of excellence in solving our national issues through discussion. I am confident, everybody 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' dreamt by Bangabandhu. I believe people from all strata of life would contribute to build an IT-based happy and prosperous Bangladesh by materializing the 'Vision' in 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 of the country. May the Almighty be with us.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.


Md. Zillur Rahman



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 of Bangladesh.

The 26th March is a glorious day in our national life. On this great day, I pay my deep homage to the 3 million martyrs and 200 thousand women who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation in 1971.

I recall with deep gratitude the great leader of our liberation struggle, the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose dynamic leadership we earned our great independence.

I also pay my humble tributes to four national leaders and the valiant freedom fighters, who had fought against the Pakistani occupation forces to free our beloved motherland.

I extend my sympathies 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 wholehearted support and cooperation for the cause of our liberation.

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of the 26th March, 1971 after the occupation forces launched sudden attack on the innocent and unarmed Bangalees on the black night of the 25th March, 1971. Bangabandhu's proclamation was spread all over the country through telegrams, tele-printers and EPR wireless. At each and every district and subdivision, Awami League's leaders and workers publicized the declaration widely through mikes. The international media also had circulated Bangabandhu's proclamation of independence. Under the brave and dauntless leadership of Bangabandhu, we earned the ultimate victory on the 16th December, 1971 after a 9-month bloody war.

The independence earned through huge bloodbath and sacrifice is our people's greatest achievement. To ensure that this achievement remains meaningful, the spirit of our great liberation war should be reached to every nook and corner of the country. Cherishing the true history of the liberation war close to our hearts, we would have to go ahead in achieving the objectives of the Charter of Change by building a Bangladesh, free from corruption, mal-governance, terrorism, hunger and poverty.

The present Awami League government has been implementing huge development programmes in all sectors, including agriculture, education, health, law and order, information technology, energy and power and communications. The defeated anti-liberation, communal and identified reactionary forces are trying to undo the democratic and development process of our beloved country at a time when our government had executed the verdict of Bangabandhu's assassination case, and is holding the trial of the war criminals.

On this auspicious day of our independence, I urge the countrymen to remain united to foil the ill-designed plots of the anti-democratic and anti-liberation forces against the government and the people.

We have been striving hard to establish Bangladesh as a poverty-, hunger- and illiteracy-free modern Digital Bangladesh by the Golden Jubilee year of our independence through implementing 'Vision-2021'. I hope that all citizens of our country would engage themselves with their utmost sincerity, honesty and dedication to build Bangladesh as a prosperous and prestigious country in comity of nations.

I am confident that Insha-Allah, with our united efforts, we would surely achieve our golden Bangladesh as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.


Sheikh Hasina

Our great Independence was achieved through the sacrifice of millions of life. It was achieved not only through an announcement. The Bangalee nation had to sacrifice huge blood in their protracted struggle against the misrule, deprivation, discrimination and exploitation. A good number of our people had to embrace martyrdom even much before our liberation war had begun.

Bangalee is a brave nation. This nation never compromised with any injustice and illegality. Where there is injustice there is voice of Bangalee against it. When the whole population of Bangla, with all their anger and hatred against the misdeed of the Pakistani rulers, was bursting into the ultimate protest, then Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman guided them to be prepared for our war of Independence. He could understand by virtue of his political sagacity what would be the appropriate way to carry forward the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. He never took recourse to any imprudent decisions in his political life. He led the liberation struggle of Bangladesh step by step to a success. In an address at the Awami League central committee meeting he said – "I am not a man of jumping into conclusion. I began to dream of the Independence in 1947-48. But I moved step by step, I do not become impatient. I am not an adventurer."

Bangabandhu formally sowed the seed of Independence in the six-point movement. The six-point demand was made for economic emancipation, social equity and self-determination – in short for the freedom of Bangalee. These six points in course of time took the force of ultimate war of liberation in March 1971. The slogans of Independence began to spread around in the sky everywhere in March 1971. The whole of Bangladesh then vibrated with the slogans of "Joy Bangla", "Brave Bangali take up arms, make the country independent", "Wake up, wake up, Bangalee wake up" etc. Ignoring the bloody eyes of the administrators, the flag of independent Bangla was hoisted at the Arts faculty of Dhaka University. On the following day the proposed national anthem was presented and national flag was displayed. The rule of Pakistan became ineffective at that time. The offices and courts

became inoperative by the order of Bangabandhu. The name of Radio Pakistan was given "Dhaka Betar Kendra (Dhaka Radio Station)". On the 6th March, 325 prisoners broke the Dhaka prisons and fled away.

In the morning of March 7, Joseph S. Farland, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan in a meeting with Bangabandhu at his residence in Dhanmondi said, the USA would not endorse self-declaration of Independence in East Bangla. But Bangabandhu was not the person to submit to any authority or illegal power. In the meanwhile, millions of mass people thronged into the Racecourse field (now Suhrawardi Udyan) with bamboo sticks, oars, scythes-spades, choppers etc in their hands to hear their undisputed leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. As a matter of fact, they all were eagerly waiting to get the direction of Bangabandhu.

Bangabandhu in his 19-minute epoch making address composed the first unwritten constitution of Bangladesh. The six point movement for self-determination was transformed into a one point demand of Independence. The March 7 address of Bangabandhu was the unwritten Constitution of Bangladesh until the Constitution was written. Bangabandhu began his address touching upon the issues of politics, exploitation, deprivation in the life of Bangalees, economic, social and cultural freedom of Bangalees, the rule of law, social justice and equity etc. He also gave prudent direction about the preparation of wars and the various means to face the war time situations. As a matter of fact, after the historic address of March 7, the whole nation jumped into the war of Independence. They began to prepare themselves for an armed war against the occupation forces. The male and female students of Dhaka University began to receive military training. Armed training was being given to the youngsters at the Dhaka University playground and a number of places in the country. The retired soldiers came forward to provide them training. The flag of

Independence Day this year. We wanted to hear from them about their expectation in the areas of social equity, employment, communication infra-structure, education, health, information technology, environment, population, politics, awareness about the spirit of liberation war, trial of war criminals, tourism etc. The following has been gleaned directly from their free opinions.



Shivel Islam Ritika (22)
 M.Pharm
 State University of Bangladesh.

We the new generation feel a strong emotion for the War of Liberation. The War of Liberation with an enriched history of huge sacrifice and unbelievable heroism inspires us to build our country, stimulates us to have dreams about the country and also to be proud of it. The new generation is waiting with patience to see the trial of the war criminals and to build a prosperous motherland. Besides, after 41 years of independence when we count our gains, we see we have many greater achievements. The infrastructure to meet the basic needs of the people, especially in areas of food, education, housing, health care, economy etc. have been strengthened, rate of education has been increased, besides population growth rate has been reduced. Besides, manpower export, garment industries, agriculture including export of fisheries have increased and developed, resulting in a sound economy of Bangladesh. Bangladesh is advancing with success in national and international level in the face of many natural calamities and adverse behavior of climate. We may hope that well-determined plan and practical steps to build the country will fulfill our expectation.



Shauley Tasreen Shiblee (24)
 BSc Engineering (Final Year)
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We have not yet been able to realize the real meaning of independence even after 41 years of the Independence. We have not yet seen any real

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