

# August 15, 1975

FROM PAGE 1

Pakistan welcomed the fall of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his government. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto cheered the rise of an 'Islamic' Bangladesh and announced a dole of rice and cloth for the Bengalis. And then came the radio and television address by Khondokar Moshtaq Ahmed, the commerce minister who had suddenly turned into 'president'. Broad overtones of rightwing religious politics underlined his remarks.

Bangladesh had taken a wholesale journey back to darkness. But if that was the beginning of a rejection of history as it had shaped up in 1971, there was worse to come. The infamous indemnity ordinance was but a stepping stone to the insidious things that were yet to be. And yet hope of a sort dawned, feebly, when Khaled Musharraf put the killers out to pasture through his coup of 3 November 1975. Four days later, he was dead.

All-enveloping darkness threatened to consume secular values in the land.

With the Zia regime firmly ensconced in

power, larger plans were being made to strip the country bare of the basic decency it had historically symbolized. M.G. Tawab, heading the air force and operating as a deputy martial law administrator, organized a 'seerat' conference that left few in any doubt about the military junta's intentions. In February 1976, matters became a little clearer. Khondokar Abdul Hamid, a journalist and Zia acolyte, spoke of 'Bangladeshi nationalism', a mishmash of ideas intended to drill holes in the Bengali nationalism that had propelled the nation to war against Pakistan in 1971. Then came Zia's unilateral act of tampering with the constitution. Secularism, socialism and nationalism were prised out of it and replaced with themes that were a clear negation of Bengali history. The parliament elected in February 1979, stacked as it was with apologists for 'Bangladeshi nationalism', adopted the fifth amendment to the constitution. Included in it was the indemnity ordinance. Bangabandhu's killers were safe, for no court could bring their misdeeds into question. Many of them

were sent off abroad, to serve as diplomats at various Bangladeshi missions!

A definitive manifestation of the distortion of history came through the reluctance of the regime to identify the Pakistan army as the perpetrators of the genocide in 1971. On Independence Day and Victory Day, the reference was only to an 'occupation army', never to Pakistan's soldiers. Through a repeal of the Collaborators' Act of 1972, the door was opened for ageing supporters of Pakistan's genocide to re-enter politics in independent Bangladesh. Under the cover of 'Bangladeshi nationalism', the Jamaat-e-Islami, Muslim League and other Pakistan-friendly parties swiftly occupied political arena. On state-controlled radio and television, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman turned into a non-person, a fact that persisted for as long as General Zia held on to power. Absolutely no mention of the Mujibnagar government was there; and sanitized versions of national history made their way into school textbooks.

Ziaur Rahman's murder in May 1981 only speeded

up the process of historical distortion. General H.M. Ershad, the nation's second military ruler, pushed the country even more into a communal corner when he decreed Islam as the religion of the state. It was on his watch that Bangabandhu's killers were permitted by the authorities to form a political party, which then fielded one of the assassins as its presidential candidate at the 1988 elections. Politics was made to stand on its head when another assassin was made a member of parliament. And then, in a moment of supreme irony, the dictator went all the way to Tungipara to pray at the grave of the Father of the Nation.

Irony followed irony. Untruth reigned supreme, until the return of the Awami League to power, after a long gap of twenty one years, in 1996 opened the path to a restoration of law, morality and decency in the land. Five of Bangabandhu's assassins have been hanged. Full justice will be done when their cohorts, fugitives around the world, are brought home -- to answer for their criminality.

# Verdict any day

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The defence was able to bring in four witnesses, including the accused and his cousin, in its bid to prove Salauddin was innocent and that he was not in the country during the war.

Salauddin, who has been in jail since December, 2010, had hired, fired and reappointed his counsel during the case proceedings. He eventually had a tribunal-appointed lawyer defending him but he himself played the role of a lawyer during much of the proceedings.

If convicted, Salauddin, son of Muslim League leader late Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, could even be sentenced to death.

After the three-member Tribunal-1, with Chairman Justice ATM Fazle Kabir and members Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice Anwarul Haque, kept the case waiting for judgment, Salauddin asked the court to record his gratitude towards the tribunal for the "patience and consideration" it had for him.

"Whatever be the verdict, I want my gratitude to be recorded," he said.

Justice Selim in response said, "We have given you as much opportunity as the law permits."

The prosecution ended their four-day-long closing arguments on July 31. The defence then began its argu-

ments and continued until around noon yesterday. The prosecution then responded to the defence arguments after which the judges put an end to the trial.

During the closing arguments yesterday, prosecutor Sultan Mahmud Simon pointed out "discrepancies" in the testimonies of defence witnesses.

Salauddin in his testimony said he had left the country for Karachi on March 29, 1971, and had returned to Bangladesh on April 28, 1974. Simon said during the war it only took six hours to fly to Bangladesh from Pakistan and it was possible for Salauddin to make frequent journeys.

Mentioning two books placed as evidence before the tribunal by the defence, Simon said one of those books had even listed Salauddin and his father as war criminals while the other mentions Salauddin in Bangladesh during the Liberation War.

Prosecutor Tureen Afroz said Salauddin had mercilessly killed, tortured, abducted and kept confined innocent people, including women, children and the elderly. He exhibited dreadful zeal and sadism, violent and cruel nature against the victims, she said.

On the defence's closing arguments, she said instead of

attacking the prosecution's arguments, defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena had mostly propagated his "personal philosophy" and "personal knowledge".

"It had not helped the defence of Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury in any meaningful way," said Tureen.

She said the defence in its lengthy argument had failed to make any systematic submission to cast doubt upon the charges; rather they delivered a series of "unnecessary, irrelevant and boring anecdotes".

She said most of the prosecution witnesses were victims of Salauddin's war crimes. She criticised Hena for calling the witnesses "a bunch of beggars and vagabonds".

Earlier in the day, the defence questioned whether the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, had a retrospective effect. The tribunal, which was constituted under the very act, did not entertain the defence petition.

On December 16, 2010, law enforcers had arrested Salauddin at Banani in the capital in connection with the torching of a car at Moghbazar on June 26 that year.

Later, he was shown arrested for his alleged involvement in crimes against humanity during the Liberation War, following an arrest warrant issued by a

tribunal on December 19, 2010.

He was indicted on April 4, 2012, on 23 charges.

The charges include murdering around 200 civilians; collaborating with the Pakistani occupation army to kill and torture unarmed people, looting of valuables and torching of houses and other properties; persecuting people on religious and political grounds; and committing genocide.

The two tribunals, dealing with war crimes cases, have already delivered verdicts in six cases.

The Tribunal-2 had awarded war crimes convict Kamaruzzaman, Ali Ahsanul Mohammad Mojaheed and Abul Kalam Azad the death penalty and life imprisonment to Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah. The Tribunal-1 handed down Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee the capital punishment and the party's former chief Ghulam Azam 90 years' imprisonment.

Six other people are also facing trial at the two tribunals for allegedly committing crimes against humanity during the war.

Meanwhile, Tribunal-1 yesterday decided to begin the trial of fugitive war crimes accused BNP leader MA Zahid Hossain Khokon, also known as Khokon Razakar of Faridpur.

# Indian mob beats 2 Bangladeshi boys

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On Monday night, Hemanta Koch and Shital Koch, both aged 14, of Rangtia village in Jhinaigati upazila, crossed the border to adjacent Chichingpara in Meghalaya of India, local people said, as reported by a correspondent from Sherpur.

Hemanta, a tractor driver, and Shital, a student of class eight at Rangtia High school, were in a group of five when they entered the Indian territory. Indian

villagers then chased them towards the border. Three of the group could manage to return home but Hemanta and Shital got caught by the mob.

Contacted, Subedar Abdul Kuddus, commander of Nakshi border outpost of Border Guard Bangladesh ( BGB ) confirmed the incident.

A flag meeting was held between BGB and BSF yesterday, he said, adding BSF men would hand over the bodies which were now

under Barangapara police custody in Tura district of Meghalaya.

Yesterday, six to seven Bangladeshis were crossing the Indian river Sangli with cattle when two of them, Nurnabi Miah and Mostafa Miah, got trapped on the Indian side close to Shamsar Nagar border of Patgram upazila in Lalmonirhat, said Jonab Ali, commander of Patgram BGB camp.

Nurnabi, 24, of Munsirhat village of Patgram upazila, died there.

Mostafa, 26, however, could return with injuries. He was later admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, BGB sources said, as reported by our Lalmonirhat correspondent.

"We have already sent a protest letter to BSE, asking them to hand over the body today (Wednesday)," he said, adding many iron traps were set up in the Sangli river to catch Bangladeshi cattle traders.

# Ex-CJ Amin to lead BCB trial

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and form tribunals from the members of the panel to conduct the trials of the accused.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the former chief justice confirmed his acceptance of the role. "I have given my consent to the BCB with regards to heading the panel," said Chowdhury.

The panel will consist of retired Justices of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, members of the social elite and persons with expertise in

cricket.

Chowdhury is likely to form more than one tribunal to hear the cases.

BCB officials were tight-lipped about the personnel who will make up the panel. The nine individuals, of whom three are foreigners, will have to appear before the disciplinary panel within 14 days of receiving the charges and either plead guilty or deny the charges. After that the trials to determine guilt and sentencing will commence.

**TIB FOR EXEMPLARY PUNISHMENT**

Meanwhile, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has demanded exemplary punishment of the players and officials involved in match-fixing during the BPL.

It urged ICC to reassess and strengthen its anti-corruption programmes.

"TIB is deeply concerned about the demeaning incident for the country," said a statement issued yesterday by Iftekharuzzaman, executive

director of TIB.

"We believe, by keeping the country's cricket free of corruption and establishing good governance in this popular sport through stern action, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will try to regain crores of cricket fans' trust," it added.

Besides misdeeds of cricket players, it is equally important to weed out lack of professionalism, nepotism, and the administrative and commercial influence on the part of any stakeholder.

# Turn down proposals to recast Grameen Bank

FROM PAGE 1

Prominent leaders, including Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, ex-president of Peru Alejandro Toledo, ex-president of Mexico Vicente Fox, ex-prime minister of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland, ex-US secretary of state Madeleine Albright and George Shultz, UN Foundation President Kathy Calvin, ex-chairman of Federal Reserve System Paul Volcker, and Virgin Group Chairman Sir Richard Branson, raised their voices in favour of Grameen Bank.

In an open letter, they praised the Bangladeshi prime minister for ensuring that Grameen Bank and the

Grameen businesses continue to operate in the interests of the people they are meant to serve.

"The commission has not shown the same concern for the well-being of these institutions. We believe that it and its members are attempting to lead your government astray, and are putting the Bangladeshi people and their allies at great risk."

The recommendations of the interim report would disenfranchise nearly five million borrower-shareholders in the bank, dismiss the borrowers who sit on the bank's board of directors, and replace them with government officials, said the letter.

"They would also result in the government seizing portions of the Grameen businesses."

The international leaders called upon Hasina to exercise her power to reject the recommendations for protecting the bank from disastrous consequences.

"These are recommendations which you and your finance ministry have the right to reject. We believe that implementing them could be disastrous."

"They would lead Bangladesh to violate its obligations under bilateral investment treaties, and to compromise the independence that has protected Grameen Bank from politi-

cal turmoil over the last three decades," added the letter.

In another open letter, 16 US senators, including Barbara Boxer and Michael Enzi, and an equal number of US representatives, including Rosa DeLauro and Erik Paulsen, expressed their concerns about the future of the Nobel winning organization.

"As members of the United States Congress, we write to urge you [Sheikh Hasina] to reject the recent recommendations of the commission that would jeopardise the role Grameen Bank has played in the critical fight to end poverty in Bangladesh," they said.

Grameen Bank has delivered a profound and lasting benefit to the people of Bangladesh. It has allowed millions to lift themselves and their families out of poverty and destitution, creating an independent, borrower-run company that is a model for non-governmental organizations across the globe, said the letter.

They also spoke about their great interest in the microcredit organisation founded by Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus.

"Both Bangladesh and the international community have a compelling interest in the safety and soundness of Grameen Bank. However, we are profoundly troubled by

recent proposals that would fundamentally alter the future of this Nobel Prize-winning institution."

The US leaders were particularly critical about a set of proposals that the three-member commission had tried to discuss in a workshop. However, the workshop didn't take place, as a number of invitees questioned the body's authority to hold such discussions.

In one of the recommendations, the commission suggested that the government split the bank into at least 19 zones. It made another proposal that the bank should be restructured in a way that gives the government a controlling stake

in it.

The suggestions in the commission's interim report, which was submitted to the finance ministry in February, also drew flak from the US politicians.

"We believe the implementation of any of these recommendations would be disastrous."

"Such action would undermine the women borrowers and shareholders who have made the Bank such a success and would compromise the independence that has protected Grameen Bank from political turmoil over the last three decades," read the letter from the US politicians.

Meanwhile, Finance

Minister AMA Muhith firmly said the government would keep its share at 25 percent in Grameen Bank though the commission recommended raising its stake in the bank.

"The government had 25 percent share in the bank and we are just retaining it. This is the final decision," he told reporters at his secretariat office yesterday.

The government has 25 percent share in Grameen Bank, while the remaining 75 percent is owned by its borrower-shareholders, mostly women.

The minister also said the government had no intention to change the current structure of the bank that has 8.4 million borrower-members.

# SIGNATORIES TO THE OPEN LETTERS

**Madeline Albright**  
Former U.S. Secretary of State;  
Chair, Albright Stonebridge Group

**Roger Altman**  
Executive Chairman, Evercore

**Sheila Bair**  
Former Chairman, Federal Deposit  
Insurance Corporation

**Sir Richard Branson**  
Founder and Chairman, Virgin Group;  
Co-Founder, The B Team

**Gro Harlem Brundtland**  
United Nations Special Envoy on  
Climate Change; Former Prime Minister  
of Norway

**Ursula Burns**  
CEO, Xerox

**Kathy Calvin**  
President and CEO,  
UN Foundation

**Gil Crawford**  
CEO, MicroVest  
Capital Management LLC

**Christopher Dodd**  
Former Senior U.S. Senator for the  
State of Connecticut; Former Chairman,  
Senate Committee on Banking

**Vicente Fox**  
Former President of Mexico

**Edward M. Kelley**  
Governor (Ret.),  
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**Kerry Kennedy**  
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Center for Justice and Human Rights

**Arthur Levitt**  
Former Chairman, U.S. Securities and  
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**Eugene A. Ludwig**  
Founder and CEO,  
Promontory Financial Group;  
Former U.S. Comptroller of the Currency

**Susan McCaw**  
Former U.S. Ambassador  
to Austria

**Mairead Maguire**  
Nobel Peace Prize winner  
and peace activist

**Michael Moskow**  
Former President and CEO,  
Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago

**Frank Newman**  
Former U.S. Deputy Secretary  
of the Treasury; Former Acting  
U.S. Secretary of the Treasury

**Thomas Nides**  
Former U.S. Deputy Secretary  
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Former U.S. Federal  
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Committee on Banking, Housing and  
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Executive Director, Georgetown  
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Global Women's Issues

**Paul Volcker**  
Former Chairman,  
Board of Governors of the  
Federal Reserve System

**Timothy Wirth**  
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Former U.S. Senator from the  
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**Jochen Zeitz**  
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