

Achievement of Our Liberation Struggle

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becomes easier. The Indian government should immediately recognize our country and our government'. Immediately after this, India launched a counter-offensive on Monday, 6 December, at 10 am; the Indian government also accorded recognition to the sovereign and independent government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Quoting the name 'People's Republic of Bangladesh' from the declaration of independence adopted by the Mujibnagar government on 10 April 1971, Mrs Indira Gandhi told a session of the Indian parliament, "Bangladesh shall be known as the People's Republic of Bangladesh". After the Indian Prime Minister's speech, the MPs welcomed this announcement with thunderous applause. I recall with deep gratitude the role played by the Indian government and its citizens throughout the liberation war, from the beginning to its end.

7 December was a special day for the Mujibnagar government and the Mujib Bahini. On this day the Jessore region, which was under my command as one of the principal commanders of the Mujib Bahini, was liberated from the occupiers. The flag of independent Bangladesh was raised in all parts of Jessore. On that day, we the leaders of Mujibnagar government and the commanders of Mujib Bahini entered the liberated areas of independent Bangladesh for the first time wearing the uniform of victory. The people welcomed us with wreaths of flowers. That feeling of joy cannot be expressed in mere words. Many mention about the misunderstanding between the Mujibnagar government and the Mujib Bahini. Actually, that was not true. Our headquarters were based in Kolkata. I used to communicate with the Mujibnagar government regularly. I remember General Uban, who used to train us at Dehradun. I also remember General Sarkar and D P Dhar, who used to coordinate our activities by maintaining contact. Here, there was no scope for any whim of individuals. Everybody was well-organized and disciplined with plans of their own. The Mujib Bahini was composed of politically progressive freedom fighters who fought by dividing Bangladesh into four large zones. The main task of Mujib Bahini was to confront the Pakistani forces together with the Bangladesh Mukti Bahini (freedom fighters) led by the commander-in-chief General Ataul Gani Osman.

My jurisdictions as one of the principal commanders of Mujib Bahini were the regions of Pabna, Kustia, Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur, Barisal and Patuakhali. The responsibility of Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Bhui was then Chittagong division. Razzak Bhai's jurisdiction was a huge area encompassing greater Mymensingh and Sirajganj regions. Siraj Bhai was in charge of the northern region. Mujib Bahini's training was conducted in Dehradun. After completion of training at Dehradun, I used to bring the members of my sector by air to the Barackpur camp. Before the



Mujib Bahini members entered the Bangladesh territory, we used to bid them adieu with tearful eyes after embracing them and kissing their foreheads. In our speeches at the training camps of Mujib Bahini, we used to say by referring to Bangabandhu Mujib, "Dear leader, we do not know where you are and how you are! As long as we do not succeed in liberating Bangladesh of your dream from the clutches of the invaders, we shall not return to our mothers' lap". We really returned to our mother's lap on the day we emerged victorious after nine months of a blood-drenched liberation war. I and my esteemed leader Abdur Razzak returned to Dhaka by helicopter. We then set our feet on the soil of independent Bangladesh. What euphoria we saw all around! It cannot be expressed in words!

We first rushed to the place where Bangabandhu's family was kept captive; they included wife of Bangabandhu revered Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib, his daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, and son Sheikh Russel. But on top of our joy, we were remembering our dearest leader Bangabandhu. That much cherished Bangladesh had become independent – for which we had shouted slogans on the roads, for which we relentlessly strove under the dynamic leadership of Bangabandhu. Today, we are free from the invaders, we are independent!

The leaders of Mujibnagar government returned home on 22 December after uniting the people irrespective of party-opinion-class through displaying unprecedented skill in infusing faith and confidence, and by successfully conducting the liberation war. We welcomed the leaders with wreaths of victory at the airport. There were lakhs of people all around. The whole place was reverberating with the slogan of 'Joy Bangla'. There were huge assemblies of freedom fighters and mirthful processions all around. People were rushing forward to see us. The glow of pride that I

saw in the eyes and faces of the general masses illumined the scene with the luminous pride of eternal victory. Despite losing their near ones, the faces of all Bangalis carried the smiles of contentment; that scene still floats in my mind. But beyond the ecstasy of victory, I was remembering our dearest leader Bangabandhu. Whoever I met, everybody was asking: "Where is Bangabandhu? How is he, when would he return"? Arrangements were made to offer special prayers and undertake fasting for the release of Bangabandhu by all classes of freedom-loving Bangladeshis. A victory without Bangabandhu was incomplete.

The verdict for hanging Bangabandhu was passed in October while the liberation war was in progress. Bangabandhu would have been taken to the gallows in December if the country was not liberated. But we knew that our leader had faith on the brave Bangalis. He used to say with pride, "They may kill me. But they cannot suppress the people of Bangla. A million Mujib would be born if they kill me". We could not consider ourselves independent even after getting rid of the invaders on 16 December, because Bangabandhu was still in Pakistani prison. We could only taste complete victory on 10 January 1972, when the Father of the Nation returned to the independent Bangladesh of his dream with chest-full of joy and the pains of losing near ones.

The killers and Pakistani collaborators belonging to the local forces 'Razakars-AI-Badars' brutally murdered the greatest sons of the Bangali nation – the intellectuals – on 14 December in accordance with their blueprint. Although December is the glorious month of victory, 14 December is a very painful day for us. I recall the fearless journalist Shaheed Sirajuddin Hossain as I remain indebted to him. He helped me by offering ideas and advices during the fiery days of the 1969 mass movement. I remember the martyred intellectuals including Munir Chowdhury, Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, Giasuddin Ahmad, Anwar Pasha, Jyotirmoy Guhathakurta and Dr. Abul Khair. The killers wanted to make us a nation bereft of intellect by killing talented sons of the nation.

The whole nation became united during those blood-spilling days of the great liberation war on the issue of the motherland's freedom. Those days were demonstrative of unprecedented national unity. We the students-teachers-intellectuals-peasants-workers-youths achieved a glorious victory through a successful people's war by participating in it directly or indirectly shoulder to shoulder after forging unity. And here lay the historic success of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Mujib. By calling for independence, he transformed an unarmed nation into an armed one. We shouted slogans during those days – 'Wake up wake up, Bangali wake up'; 'Pindi or Dhaka – Dhaka, Dhaka'; 'Your home my home, Padma-Meghna-Jamuna'; 'Valiant Bangali take up arms, liberate Bangladesh'; 'Joy Bangla', etc.

At that time, it was immaterial whether one was a Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist or Christian. Our identity was: 'We are all Bangali'. It seems amazing to me that the Pakistani prison could not hold Bangabandhu back; despite a verdict of death sentence, they could not execute it. The collaborators of the defeated forces, the gang of the murderers Moshtaque-Rashid-Faruque-Dalim assassinated Bangabandhu along with his family-members on 15 August 1971! General Zia rehabilitated the enemies of our independence, who had killed the sons of our mothers and fathers, and the husbands of our sisters, by banishing the ideals of our liberation war from our constitution. During the period when there was a resurgence of the defeated forces, it seemed to me repeatedly that the joy of victory was short-lived while the pangs of defeat lasted for a long time.

Despite all these, the people of Bangla have once again turned around under the leadership of Awami League after a protracted struggle. Led by the leader of the masses Sheikh Hasina, our constitution written with the blood of millions of martyrs has returned to its four basic principles. Our pledge in the month of victory – December – is the trial of the war criminals. The trial process is progressing in accordance with law. The convicts who committed crimes against humanity have been made to stand on the dock for their crimes. All freedom fighters as well as the new generation want the trial of war criminals for the vile and ghastly acts they committed. Nobody can hold us back from executing this pledge of trying the war-criminals of 1971, who had committed crimes against humanity.

Despite all efforts by the adversaries, Bangladesh is marching forward. Breaking all previous records, all our socio-economic indicators are today advancing in the direction of progress. The population of the country was 70 million after independence and there was scarcity of food in the households of war-ravaged Bangladesh. But today, though the country has a population of 160 million, the food-stock is full to the brim. Total exports from the country during 1972-73 financial year was US Dollar 348 million; now it has risen to 30.19 billion dollar. The target of exporting readymade garments on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence has been set at US Dollar 50 billion. There was hardly any foreign exchange reserve after the independence of Bangladesh; starting our journey from almost nil, today our reserve has crossed 22 billion dollar mark. Whereas our per capita income was then only 50-60 dollar, today it has risen to US Dollar 1190, and US Dollar 1900 according to the PPP (purchasing power parity). As claimed by leading surveyors of the world, the economists ranked Bangladesh among the 11 emerging economies. According to a World Bank report, Bangladesh is ahead of India in major social sectors.

That is, overall Bangladesh has an emerging economy, although we are still less developed. Despite that, we are pledge-bound to the people and are hopeful that we shall be transformed into a middle-income country in 2021, in accordance with the Vision declared by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Already, our Honourable Speaker Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury and Member of Parliament Saber Hossain Chowdhury have been elected directly to the top posts of two international organizations, namely CPA and IPU; they have enhanced our pride on foreign soil. Today, we can proudly say on the 43rd anniversary of our great victory day that treading the same path of the dream with which the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had established an independent and sovereign People's Republic of Bangladesh, our country is being transformed into a secular, democratic and deprivation-free golden Bangladesh under the dynamic leadership of his competent successor and leader of the masses Sheikh Hasina. Bangladesh will soon establish herself in the international arena as a country free from hunger and poverty. Just as the global community had looked at the valiant Bangalis with reverence in 1971 during our liberation war, similarly Bangladesh is now gradually becoming an object of respect honoured by all as she frees herself from the stigmas of the past.

[The writer is a Member of Parliament and Minister for Commerce of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh]

Translation: **Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed**

- j) Recovery of the salinity inflicted crop lands of the south;
- k) Exploration of the integration of the land accretion from sea with the mainland.
- l) Major overhaul of BSTI into an institution of global standards; and
- m) Strengthening the administration, management and governance.

In addition, the newly proposed Planning Commission with enhanced authority will ensure availability of accurate database. It will pay attention to monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects relating physical progress to the financial outlay.

Implementation of Mega Projects

In Bangladesh, development projects do not seem to move without the intervention of the Head of the Government. She/he may be facilitated to oversee the largest projects as is done in Malaysia, South Korea and Indonesia. Projects such as (a) Padma Bridge, (b) Rail, Road and Waterways projects, (c) Electricity generation projects including the Coal Bangla Projects for generating 10000MW energy to start with, (d) the gas exploration projects, (e) the Blue Economy, (f) Solution of the KEPZ dilemma through mutual consultation, (g) Shifting of the CETP equipped leather industry to the Savar Industrial Estate, (h) Quadrupling the capacity of Eastern Refinery and such other projects as singled out apex monitoring.

Notwithstanding political and ideological differences, major political parties would do well to reach national consensus on broad macroeconomic issues for effective implementation through a continuation of the policy framework. With the steady trend in poverty reduction, it may be wiser to concentrate on a strategy of climbing the ladder of the Human Development Index (HDI)

which has improved to 0.525 in 2012 to the level of Medium HDI by 2021 and to High HDI by 2030. In addition to the priority attention to the transformation of the human persons into human resources, initiatives are needed for mainstreaming the persons with disability and autism, unofficially estimated to be close to 10 million. Attention to the ever increasing number of senior citizens is also in order. The economic participation rate of women reached 40% in 2014 compared to 03% in 1972; more progress is necessary; 50 (fifty) percent nomination by 2030 to women in the parliamentary election is recommended as well.

Effective governance is stated to be the mother infrastructure for socio-economic development. It is essential to put in place an honest and efficient, a transparent and confidence generating administration. Law has to apply to all without fear or favour. The drive against the law breakers may start against the land and the waterbody grabbers. Of the 08 (eight) lakh automobiles without fitness certificates, half a million are stated to be beyond repair. Half the motor vehicle

drivers do not have valid licenses. For road safety and to minimize senseless killings by reckless driving, the High Court has recently revived the 7 year prison term; the offence could be made a non-bailable offence as before. Rigorous training and passing the test must be insisted upon before a driving license is issued. All commercial vehicles aged 10 years or more may be subjected to increasingly higher road taxes. Sustained drives to punish the offence on vehicles without fitness certificates, drivers found guilty of reckless driving and driving without license. Accidents and traffic congestion may reduce thereby. Government revenue will rise too. Old vehicles will be replaced by new high quality new buses. Innovative land management policy, if crafted carefully and implemented meticulously would generate substantive revenue particularly from the urban properties.

The introduction of the value added Tax (VAT) in 1991-92 worked wonders and the self-financing of the annual development programme, ADP rose from 0 (zero) percent to 50 (fifty) percent. A reformed and expanded VAT, if formulated with careful analysis and implemented with vigour may cause another major kick-up in Tax/GDP ratio.

Bangladesh is blessed with wonderful people, reasonable physical and mineral resources, very fertile land, a strategically important geo-political location, 118000 square kilometers of sea and a 200 mile long continental shelf, very hardworking farmers and industrial workers as well as entrepreneurs of proven quality. The economy is fortunate to be in the good book of the largest (China), third largest (Japan) and the fifth largest (India) economies of the world. The hitherto missing link is national consensus to work unitedly to further ignite the concerted efforts to build the cherished goal of Sonar Bangladesh.

The author is former governor of Bangladesh Bank.

Victory Day 1971

Syed Shamsul Haq

On my rifle's tip on 16 December
I raised the flag of victory
For our people had come to power
And the earth had become our own.

Not unfurled by the diktat of the arrogant ?
This was the image of a mother's face.
It flew powered by the heart's current;
It was the flag raised by a wakeful mother.

And so let freedom now flow unfettered
From the palms of the victorious son,
Let Mujib's dream once more be realized
And Bengal become part of a golden age.

Translation: **Professor Fakrul Alam**

Victory Day

Kamal Chowdhury

The pen that dries up before surrender
Symbolises ultimate defeat.

This landscape is not ordinary. Because in this scene
The birds express joy of victory alongside freedom-seeking people
Because where the bullets extinguish millions of lives
Aversion and euphoria are written in the hue of red hibiscus.

Because we are today sky-rending slogans
After returning from exile
We also have become sovereign feather after the war
We also are the corpses of our self-exiled kin
Afloat in the river of blood.
The refugee poem of Ginsberg is returning
Because of our searing rage.

We are the people of this delta
We live with the dream of rice and fish
We are Mujib's men
The smell of our gun-powder mixes with the dye of flag
In the language of sacrifice and glory.

There is no defeat
In the war that embodies love
The dawn returns daily to the blood of a triumphant nation
During sunrises day after day
The invaders surrender.

Translation: **Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed**

The Victory Celebration

Asad Chowdhury

Rivers, and our poor streams
Suddenly get excited all over
in a frolicsome manner
like that of a maiden;
What has happened? what's the matter?
Asks the silver fish anxiously
On dances the frantic river, who will give the answer?

The vast welkin
turns on the sunlight
from every direction,
The birds ask the same question
When the silent sky keeps on smiling.

Piercing radiance is there
in villages and market-places, in cities and harbours,
in mills and factories,
in prayer rooms,
in schools and hostels,
That light spreads everywhere.

The number of wayfarers treading the road of light, is not one but millions
Those who held death in their grip out of joy
Now come back
With an aching heart for the loss of their dear ones...

The rejoice of the domestic animals mingles with the ecstasy of
tigers and jackals, serpents and crocodiles
and many more unknown beasts
I don't know how to sing, but it matters not
Come and cheer, let's celebrate
Today marks our Victory Celebration.

Translation: **Saera Habib**

