

10 January

HOME COMING DAY OF FATHER OF THE NATION



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**PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
BANGLADESH**

Message

10th January is the 'Homecoming Day' of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On this memorable day, I recall this great leader with profound respect.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Father of the Nation and the greatest Bangali of all time was the proclaimer of independence. He was a great Statesman and the voice of deprived, oppressed and down-trodden people of the world as well as the source of inspiration. Starting from Language Movement of 1952, this great leader led every movement towards attaining self-determination of the Bangalis including the 6-point movement in 1966, mass-upsurge in 1969 and the General Election of 1970. Finally he declared country's historic independence at the early hours on March 26, 1971. After that he was instantly arrested by the Pakistani Army and sent to Pakistan prison. On this day in 1972, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned to the newly born independent Bangladesh after being freed from Pakistani prison where he passed an uncertain life for about nine and a half months. People from all walks of life were overwhelmed with joy and enthusiasm on his return to independent Bangladesh from Pakistan jail, facing deadly challenges, which was the ultimate result of his life-long struggle and dream. Hundreds of thousands of people came out on the road from Airport to the then Racecourse Maidan to greet him, which was an unprecedented sight. Returning from the gallows, on this day, the undisputed leader of Bangali nation uttered with emotion at the Racecourse Maidan, "My lifelong dream comes true. Today my golden Bengal is an independent and sovereign state. ... We have achieved independence. So long as a single Bangali is alive this independence will not be allowed to go in vain."

The patriotism and love for the country of Father of the Nation is extraordinary in the chequered history. He loved the country more than his life which was echoed in his speech on 10th January. He said, "From now if anybody wants to snatch the independence of Bangladesh, then Mujib will be the first to sacrifice his life in order to protect independence." It is my firm belief that so long as we remain imbued with the ideal of Bangabandhu our independence and sovereignty will remain safe. Our great leader Bangabandhu, on that day, urged all to build a 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal). I hope that we shall be able to materialise the dream of Bangabandhu by rendering our respective duties imbued with the spirit of patriotism, inshallah.

On this day, I call upon all irrespective of party affiliation to work unitedly to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Md. Abdul Hamid

five million people in bondage. Now that we have learnt to die no power on earth can keep us in subjugation." Then he told his own people: "... In every village, every neighbourhood, formed Sangram Parishad under the leadership of the Awami League. And be prepared with whatever you have. Remember: Having mastered the lesson of sacrifice, we shall give more blood. God willing, we shall free the people of this land. The struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation. The struggle this time is a struggle for independence."

Call for Defending War

Up to March 25, it was Bangabandhu who was the key-decision maker of the country. The Government House and the Cantonments were the only exceptions. Offices, court houses, educational institutions, banks, transport systems all were running or kept stopped with Bangabandhu's instructions only. Bangabandhu arrested at the night past the day of March 25 and was taken to Pakistan custody. On the eve of the incident, that is, at the early hours of March 26, he managed to send through EPR a radio message to his countrymen urging to combat Pakistani attacks and declaring the Independence of Bangladesh. The proclamation of Independence by Bangabandhu was as follow:

"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."

After this, Bangabandhu's proclamation of Independence was also approved and supported in the official proclamation by Mujibnagar Government on 10 April.

People's War in the Name of Bangabandhu

People from all walks of life of this land joined in to combat Pakistani raiders from the very beginning of the war. Peasants joined leaving their ploughs, workers joined leaving their tools, students joined leaving the books and women came out disregarding family ties. Middle-income group people of different professions came out doctors, engineers, teachers, bureaucrats, artists, journalists. Army and border guards, police and ansar, students and youths, teachers and government officials whoever had any scope at any place resisted the Pakistan army. Training arrangement for the young fighters and weapons collection for the army were done with the cooperation of the government of India. Training on weapons operating and guerilla warfare were run. Shwadin Bangla Radio Center spread fiery words to inspire the freedom fighters at every corner. A major portion of Bangali diplomats working in different countries left Pakistani side and showed their loyalty to the government of Bangladesh, and overseas Bangalis in those countries collectively started lobbying for international support. Overseas Bangalis made publicity in different countries and collected fund for the war.

After the most barbaric attacks by the Pakistani army in the black night of 25 March, people of this land stood against them within a few days. They made a defence. Political leaders were dispersed at the beginning, very quickly they were organized in the land of India. So the announcement of establishing Bangladesh government was possible within so short a period on 10 April. The government took oath in presence of local and foreign journalists on 17 April at Baidonathata of Meherpur. The place was renamed later as Mujibnagar. It is Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was made President of that government; as he was in captivity, Syed Nazrul Islam performed as the Acting President. Thus, our Liberation War became a people's war in the name of Bangabandhu, taking him at the center of inspiration. Tajuddin Ahmed became Prime Minister in the Mujibnagar Government.

Many foreign journalists published stories of the atrocities of Pakistan army and that of the distresses of refugee Bangalis. Hence, conscientious people of many countries gave moral support to our movement. Although the USA government was in favour of Pakistan, many public representatives, journalists and intellectuals of the country were in favour of our Liberation War. As a result, Bangladesh became an independent and sovereign country through an armed war of the mass people in less than nine months.

Deceptive Trial of Bangabandhu in Custody

The Pakistani government decided to hang Bangabandhu from the very start of the farcical trial. Quoting Radio Australia, 'The Statesman' reported that Yahya Khan had said during private discussions on 26 March night that 'Sheikh would have to die'. In an interview with the French periodical 'Le Figaro', he identified Bangabandhu as an enemy of the Pakistani people. In the book 'Massacre', journalist and writer Robert Paine narrated Yahya's views in the following fashion: "My generals are putting pressure to arrange the trial and death sentence for Sheikh Mujib in a military court. I have agreed and the trial will be held very soon".

12 charges were made against Bangabandhu, including that of treason. Six of them carried the death penalty. The Pakistani government declared the commencement of the trial on 11 August through a press release issued on 9 August. There were storms of protests all over the world after the start of the trial. The global mass media also played a role in creating wider public opinion in this regard. Due to this pressure of global public opinion Yahya kept the verdict of the trial a secret after holding discussions with his advisers. But when the final phase of the war started on 3 December and Yahya sensed certain defeat, he hurriedly made the verdict of the trial public on 4 December. It sentenced Bangabandhu to death, holding him guilty based on charges brought against him. After that, he was transferred to the Mianwali jail of Islamabad from Lyallpur. A grave was dug just beside his cell for executing the death penalty. Although a special telegram was supposed to be sent to the jail authority for execution of the verdict, it was not sent due to the surrender by the Pakistani army in Dhaka on 16 December.

Victory and Unfulfillment

Towards the end of the war, Pakistan tried to create an internationalization of the situation by shaping our Liberation War as a war between India and Pakistan. So they made air attacks in different places of India. War started between the two countries. No sooner had this new war begun than India formally recognised Bangladesh. An India-Bangladesh joint military command was formed. One after another places of Bangladesh began to be free. Pakistanis did not get any way for escape. Pakistan army surrendered to India-Bangladesh joint forces on 16 December in the afternoon at the Racecourse Maidan in Dhaka.

Although the Bangalis expressed their joy and delight after achieving victory on 16 December, they were saddened by the martyrdom of three million people and the absence of their dearest leader. There were many write-ups in the then international media on whether Bangabandhu was alive or not. In such a situation, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto clarified Bangabandhu's status to the journalists on 20 December after taking over the responsibility of the President of Pakistan. The New York Times published the announcement of the Pakistani government on Bangabandhu's release on 21 December. Bangabandhu was brought to Rawalpindi on 23 December for discussions with Bhutto. The seasoned politician Bhutto made a last-ditch attempt to preserve the unity of the 'two wings of Pakistan' by putting pressure on Bangabandhu. News could be gathered from the mass media about the two meetings held between Bangabandhu and Bhutto on 27 and 29 December. In both the meetings Bhutto had urged Bangabandhu to preserve the existence of Pakistan at any cost. Bangabandhu did not respond to that call. In that situation, Bangabandhu was tactful. Bangabandhu expressed his inability to make any such commitment before talking to his people after returning home.

Accomplishment of Victory

Bangabandhu returned via London and Delhi and touched the soil of his homeland Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the true spokesperson of the world's oppressed and hard working people, reached the Heathrow Airport of London on 8 January 1972 by a special aircraft of PIA after being freed from a nine and a half months of captivity in the dark cells of Pakistani prisons. Why did he go to London first? Because, Pakistani President Bhutto earlier explained to Bangabandhu that there would be serious political repercussions if he (Bangabandhu) had been sent direct to Bangladesh or India. So he proposed to Bangabandhu to go to Iran or Turkey first. In this situation, Bangabandhu chose London as an alternative by his own choice.

On arriving at London, Bangabandhu delivered a speech in a press conference of huge gathering. There he told, "Today I am free to share the unbounded joy of freedom with my fellow country members. ... I cannot wait a single moment to return to my people!" He appealed to all the states to state the recognition to Bangladesh, to make diplomatic relations with her and to support her for immediate admission to the United Nations.

Bangabandhu left for New Delhi on 9 January 1972 by a special aircraft of British government and reached New Delhi on 10 January in the morning.

During his stay in London, Bangabandhu made courtesy calls on the then Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Leader of the Opposition and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth. Till then Bangabandhu had not formally sworn as the President. Still he was received at the airport with the honour reserved for a Head of State. A 21-gun salute was made for him. He was welcomed by the then Indian President V V Giri and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and by diplomatic representatives of 24 states including the UK and the Soviet Union.

Bangabandhu put his footsteps on the soil of his homeland at Tejgaon Airport at 1:41 p.m. on 10 January from New Delhi. The road from Racecourse ground to Tejgaon Airport was jam-packed with crowds of people who were eagerly waiting for him. Bangabandhu was driven to Ramna Racecourse by an open truck. It took about 130 minutes for Bangabandhu to reach the Racecourse Maidan passing through flowery welcome and a crowd of lacs of people.

Media Coverage of the Homecoming Day

An editorial headline on 10 January 1972 of Kathmandu based newspaper 'The New Herald' was 'Unchallengeable Reality'. The New Herald stated: "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is now not only a free man but also the Head of the State of a country that has just proclaimed itself as independent. It must have become clear to all by now that Bangladesh is a reality and the sooner every nation recognizes it the better for it." When the New Herald published this editorial even Nepal did not recognize Bangladesh.

Before this, the New York Times wrote in their editorial on 3 January 1972: "Bangladesh urgently needs



**PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH**



Message

The 10th January of 1972 is one of the red letter days in the chronology of the liberation struggle of Bangali nation. On this day, the greatest Bangali of all time, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned to independent Bangladesh after over nine and a half months' confinement in a Pakistan jail.

Bangladesh Awami League earned absolute majority in the 1970 elections under the leadership of the Father of the Nation. But the Pakistani military junta continued to cling to power ignoring the people's mandate staging various farces. A cruel persecution descended on the Bangali nation. Aiming at an ultimate target to free the Bangali nation, the Father of the Nation in his address at the then historic Racecourse Maidan on the 7th March in 1971 declared, "This time the struggle is for our freedom, this time the struggle is for the independence." The Pakistani occupation forces launched brutal attack on innocent Bangalis and carried out massacre on the 25th March in 1971. The Father of the Nation declared Independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of the 26th March. The Bangali nation started the liberation war.

The Father of the Nation was then arrested and sent to a lonely jail in Pakistan. Bangabandhu was subjected to inhuman torture in the Pakistani jail where he had been counting moments for execution of his death sentence pronounced in a farcical trial. In the face of death sentence, Bangabandhu rejoiced the spirit of Bangali nation. He was the inspiration of the freedom fighters. Under his charismatic leadership, Bangali nation earned the ultimate victory waging the 9-month solemnly-vowed war. The defeated Pakistani rulers had finally been compelled to free Bangabandhu from the jail. The Father of the Nation returned to the independent Bangladesh on the 10th January in 1972. On his return, he delivered a historic speech where he narrated the inhuman torture of the Pakistani military junta. The Bangali Nation has gotten back the Father of the Nation and their victory attained the fulfillment through his freedom.

After his return, Bangabandhu had devoted all his efforts to rebuild the war-ravaged Bangladesh. His heroic leadership ensured immediate withdrawal of the Indian allied forces from Bangladesh's soil. Responding to his call, various international organizations, including the UN and the friendly countries, quickly gave recognition to Bangladesh. Bangladesh earned the membership of the OIC in 1974. Bangladesh soon made its strong position in the comity of nations under the leadership of Bangabandhu.

The assassins halted the march-forward of Bangladesh through killing Bangabandhu along with most of his family members on August 15 in 1975. The armed usurpers marred the democracy, defaced the constitution and halted the trend of progress and development.

The democracy has been reestablished after protracted struggles and sacrifices. A positive change has been brought in the people's living standard. Per capita income has been raised to USD 1200. Forex reserve crosses USD 22 billion. Bangladesh is now dubbed as a model in terms of socio-economic and trade and commerce. We are taking Bangladesh towards the desired advancement. We have reestablished the spirit of the Liberation War through the 15th amendment to the Constitution. It sealed off usurping power through any unconstitutional means and ensured the hope and aspiration of the people.

Let us come and build a hunger and poverty free, prosperous, non-communal, peaceful Bangladesh being imbued with the spirit of Liberation. Let us build a "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by the Father of the Nation where there will be no difference between the rich and the poor, and equal opportunity of prosperity will be available for all.

We should take a fresh vow on the homecoming day of the Father of the Nation so that no evil force could disrupt the ongoing march of our progress and development.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina
Sheikh Hasina



Racecourse to Racecourse : Call for Freedom, Accomplishment of Victory

Bangabandhu : The Great Saviour of Bangalis

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is an inseparable name that always goes with the Independence of Bangladesh and realization of lawful rights of the people or, their movements for economic, political and cultural emancipation. The whole period of our twenty three-year long attachment with Pakistan passed with anxiety and discomfort. During this period, Bangabandhu became a great saviour of the Bangalis by arousing thirst for freedom and giving leadership in each of the movements-struggles and achievements of this period for self-rule, democracy, building a secular society and equi-distribution of national resources. He called for Independence from the Racecourse ground on 7 March 1971. About 10 months later, the Victory of Bangali nation became fulfilled with his return to that same place.

23 Years of Oppression and Deception

In his historical public address of 7th March 1971 at the Racecourse Maidan of Dhaka, Bangabandhu described the tyranny and oppressions of Pakistani rulers over the people of Bengal in this way: "The history of the past twenty three years has been the history of a persecution of the people of Bengal, a history of the blood of the people of Bengal. This history of the past twenty three years has been one of the agonising cries of men and women. The history of Bengal has been a history where the people of this land have made the streets and highways of this land crimson with their blood." He also said, "We gave blood in 1952; in 1954, we won the elections and yet were not permitted to exercise power. In 1958, Ayub Khan imposed Martial Law and kept the nation in a state of slavery for ten long years. On 7 June 1966, as they rose in support of the Six-Point movement, the sons of my land were mown down in gunfire. When Yahya Khan took over once Ayub Khan fell in the fury of the movement of 1969, he promised that he would give us a Constitution, give us democracy. We put our faith on him. And then history moved a long way, the elections took place."

Election of '70, Ignorance of People's Verdict and the Roaring-up of Bangalis

In 1970, in the first ever general election held in Pakistan, Bangladesh Awami League attained absolute majority in the national parliament. After this, people of this land hoped that Awami League is going to attain not only the power of the eastern portion but also that of the whole Pakistan; and this land is getting rid of the autocratic rulers who had been ruling excessively. As soon as March came, Bangalis could perceive very clearly that their dream would not be fulfilled. Although the session of the national assembly scheduled to meet on 3 March 1971 was summoned officially, General Yahya postponed it for an indefinite period just two days ahead of the scheduled date. There were protests everywhere in East Bengal against this, demonstrations were made. On March 2, the flag of Bangladesh was hoisted first at the Dhaka University campus, and then at the Paltan Ground on the following day. The 17-minute speech delivered at Racecourse Maidan by Bangabandhu on March 7, after a countrywide whole week of strike, is an ever-memorable speech in the human history. The speech invigorated everyone whosever had heard it, inspired them and made them determined for the ultimate sacrifice for the country. Millions of Bangalis roared in sky-reaching slogan: "O Bangali heroes! Take weapons, make Bangladesh free."

Call-for-Freedom on 7 March

Standing in front of lacs of protesting people, Bangabandhu in his 7th March speech reflected the expectation of the crowd: "Today the people of Bengal desire emancipation, the people of Bengal wish to live, the people of Bengal demand that their rights be acknowledged." He said, "...If another bullet is fired, if any more of the people are murdered, it is my directive to all of you: turn every house into a fortress, resist the enemy with everything you have." He announced for the Pakistani rulers and military forces loyal towards them: "You cannot keep seventy

Sheikh Mujib's leadership to unify its people for urgent task of rehabilitation, reconstruction and building the nation."

On 10 January 1972, every daily newspaper of Bangladesh depicted emotion-choked stories and editorials throughout all its spaces with the news of homecoming of Bangabandhu and the eagerly waiting of the countrymen for him. The national dailies pen-pictured the long waiting of the people of this land with big headlines. In its first lead titled 'The Great man is coming and all are thrilled in every direction', the Daily Ittefaq wrote: "Today is the day we have waited for long. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is coming to the sweet lap of his motherland in the midst of overwhelming love and confidence embedded in sacrifice after a prolonged span of nine months. The jail of the Pakistani military killers was not strong enough to keep him inside." The first page editorial of this daily was 'Esho Banglar Swapnik, Swagatam' (Come the dreamer of the Bengal, welcome). The Dainik Bangla titled its editorial 'Beerer Sonitey Tomay Baran Kari' (We receive you in the pool of blood shed by our heroes). The editorial headline of the Morning Sun was 'Spirit Triumphant'. The Dainik Bangla wrote: "Today is the great event of receiving the leader, impatient waiting of the sea of people..."

That day What Bangabandhu said

On the day of return to his own independent country, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed a mammoth public meeting of about one million people at the Racecourse Maidan. Throughout that first ever speech of Bangabandhu in his independence state, there were firm commitment to protect the acquired Independence, responsibilities to make the independence meaningful, utterance of the state policy and trial of the war criminals.

Now the country is independent, Bangladesh is proud with its own politico-cultural identity. Mujib, the guide of freedom of the Bangali nation, announced his commitment of another freedom economic freedom. In his first speech delivered in his own independent country, Bangabandhu pronounced to the people: "My request from today, my orders and directives as a brother, not as a leader, not as the President or Prime Minister I am your brother, you are my brothers. This Independence will be futile unless my people of Bengal can have square meals. This Independence will remain incomplete if our mothers and sisters do not have cloths to wear. This Independence will bear no fruit if the youth do not have jobs, do not have works." He expressed hope: "This Bangladesh will grow anew. The people of Bangladesh will have smiles on their faces, they will have frolics in their life, they will breathe the fresh air and have square meals this has been the worship and longing in my life."

He reminded that Bangladesh was then the second largest Muslim country in the world and the position of Pakistan was fourth. It was a significant claim. He uttered socialism, democracy and secularism as the fundamental principles of the state policy of the independent Bangladesh. Referring to his discussion in Delhi with Srmat Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, he said, the Indian army will go home whenever he will tell them to go.

About the trial of the war criminals he said, "But those who had collaborated and those who had killed my people entering into their houses shall be tried and punished. Leave the responsibility of the trial to the government of the independent Bangladesh. Nobody will be spared. But I want that they shall be tried as citizens of an independent country in the independent courts. He called upon every state of the world and the United Nations: "Please recognise my Bangladesh and give her a place in the United Nations."

He said, "Bangladesh will remain ever independent. Nobody can suppress Bangladesh. No conspiracy will succeed in Bangla." He told emphatically, "No one will be able to snatch our independence so long a single Bangali is alive."

In this way, on 10 January 1972, the great Victory of Bangali nation was fulfilled in Racecourse Maidan, the place from where Bangabandhu called for Independence movement on 7 March 1971.

[Compilation and composition: Press Information Department]

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