

# Protect nation from militants

## PM urges all to come forward, hands Independence Award to seven eminent personalities

UNB, Dhaka  
Reiterating her government's firm stance against militant activities, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to come forward to protect the country and its people from militants.

"We don't want destruction, but development; we don't want militant acts, but peace...we want Bangladesh to become a peaceful nation in the world and continue to move ahead as a peaceful country in South Asia and that's our goal," she said.

The PM was addressing a function after distributing the Independence Award 2015 among seven eminent personalities and their representatives at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital.

Hasina noted that Bangladesh, for various reasons, had lagged behind many countries in the world who witnessed rapid progress and development after gaining independence.

"We don't want to fall behind anymore. I seek cooperation of all so that we can continue our march forward and thus can make Bangladesh a devel-

oped and prosperous country." She renewed her pledge to turn Bangladesh into a hunger- and poverty-free middle income country by 2021 and a prosperous one by 2041.

The PM alleged that the BNP-Jamaat started politics of destruction and arson, and burning people to death at a time when her government was running the country successfully after assuming office for the second successive term through the January 5 polls.

She questioned why the BNP-Jamaat was burning people to death by hurling petrol bombs (at vehicles), causing untold sufferings to the burn victims and their families.

Accusing the anti-liberation forces of destroying the spirit of Liberation War and distorting the history of sacrifices of the heroic sons of the soil after the assassination of Bangabandhu in 1975, she said military dictator Ziaur Rahman had made war criminals ministers and advisers and rewarded them in many ways.

She regretted that once the Independence Award used to be given



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with recipients of the Independence Award 2015 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

to such persons who did not want the country's independence and worked against the liberation of the country as cohorts of the Pakistani occupation forces.

Hasina recalled with deep gratitude the immense contribution of Father of

the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman towards liberating the country.

Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan conducted the function, organised by the Cabinet Division.

The awardees as per categories are-- Independence and Liberation War: Commandant Manik Chowdhury (posthumously), Mamun Mahmud (posthumously), SAMS Kibria (posthumously); Literature: Prof Anisuzzaman; Culture: Abdur Razzak;

Research and Training: Dr Mohammad Hossain Mandol; and Journalism: Santosh Gupta (posthumously).

Each of the awardees received an 18-carat gold medal weighing 50 gram, Tk 2 lakh, and a citation.

# At the dawn of independence

FROM PAGE 1  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed leader of seven crore Bangalees.

Amid constant rush of politicians and officials to the two-storey building since the morning, one man was at Bangabandhu's side most of the time -- even moments before the leader was detained by Pakistan army.

He is Haji Ghulam Murshid, an associate of Sheikh Mujib since 1946.

Now 84-year-old, Murshid shared with The Daily Star his memories of events unfolding at the Dhanmondi house on March 25, 1971.

"The five-member high command of Awami League had a meeting with Bangabandhu sometime between 10:00am and 11:00am," he said at his house near the capital's Asad Gate on March 19.

The "high command" was comprised of Tajuddin Ahmad, Syed Nazrul Islam, M Mansoor Ali, AHM Quamruzzaman and Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed, he noted.

Dr Kamal Hossain, Barrister Amir-ul Islam and Sirajul Alam Khan, among others, also sat with Bangabandhu.

Earlier that morning, Haji Ghulam Murshid had a conversation there with Ansar director Abdul Awal. "He [Abdul Awal] told me that there was a huge stock of arms and ammunition in every district police lines and suggested distributing those among police."

When Awal's suggestion was brought to his attention, Bangabandhu asked Murshid to talk to Col (ret'd) Ataul Gani Osmani, who was present there at the time.

At lunchtime, as Ghulam Murshid was about to leave for his house, then in Kakrail, Osmani wanted a lift home.

He gave Osmani a lift on his Toyota Semi Deluxe.

The retired colonel-turned politician was living as a guest at the house of Muhibus Samad, a high official of an insurance company, on Dhanmondi 5 or 6.

At his request, Murshid took lunch there after performing Zohr prayers, instead of going to Kakrail, and returned to Dhanmondi 32 around 4:00pm.

Bangabandhu and Amir-ul Islam were on the ground floor and were soon joined by Abdul Awal.

"Bangabandhu asked me and Awal to meet the SP of Dhaka, EA Chowdhury, and ask him to hand over all arms and ammo from Rajarbagh Malkhana [armoury] to the members of police force," Murshid said.

The two went to the SP's residence near the Circuit House and discussed the matter with him in detail. "The SP nodded his approval."

They returned to Dhanmondi 32 in the evening and reported to Bangabandhu.

Amir-ul Islam told Murshid to call up Mashiur Rahman, president of Jessore AL, from his own house

mother. It had become his everyday practice since she died on February 3, 1971. He was planning to go to Bangabandhu's residence from the graveyard.

When he crossed Dhaka Club, he saw barricades at Shahbagh intersection. "I could not go to Azimpur."

Murshid then turned his car to Old Airport Road. But he found

His face brightened up recalling those moments with eyes closed. After a brief pause, he opened his eyes and went on, "Bangabandhu asked me to run away. I replied, 'It's not going to happen.'"

Phone calls kept coming from different places, different people. There were two telephones at the house -- one on each floor. But

city."

Tabibur left crying. By that time, the Pakistan army pounced on the people of Bangladesh. Different units of the army fanned out in various directions.

Tanks, armoured cars and trucks loaded with soldiers headed for Dhaka University, the Central Shaheed Minar, the Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan), Hotel Intercontinental and Old Dhaka.

The sharp cracks of rifles, rat-tat-tat of machine guns, and earth-shattering shelling of mortars were all around. Tracer fire lit up the night sky.

At Bangabandhu's residence, the telephone on the ground floor rang; it was just before or after midnight.

As Murshid picked up the phone, a person from other side said, "I am calling from Balda Garden. The message has been sent. What should I do?"

He ran to Bangabandhu and delivered the message. Bangabandhu replied: "Tell him to break the machine and run away." He did it accordingly.

After some time, tracer fires lit up the house. Wearing a genji, Bangabandhu took some stairs down and asked where the lights came from.

"I pointed to a side. Bangabandhu walked up to the first floor."

Then another phone call came and Murshid got busy picking it up. "Suddenly I heard 'hands up.'" The receiver of the phone fell from his hand and he heard: "Maat maro [don't shoot]."

In no time, Murshid was hit hard in the head. He lost consciousness.

Bangabandhu was taken into custody by the Pakistan army. But already, his message embodying the Declaration of Independence was dispatched.

The Liberation War began.

Over the next few days, Bangabandhu would be kept at Adamjee Cantonment College before being flown to West Pakistan.

When Murshid woke up in the wee hours of March 26, he found himself lying on the ground, writhing in pain. The Pakistan army took him onto a vehicle with his hands tied up on his back. Someone said: "Aankh maat uhtao [don't open your eyes]."

For the rest eight months, Murshid endured untold torture until he was freed by the Pak army on November 25, 1971. And he would see the nation free twenty-one days later.



Nostalgia takes over Haji Ghulam Murshid as he shows a photograph in which the then prime minister, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is signing cheques for the martyred families, and Murshid, then an honorary aide to the PM, is helping him while Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib looks on.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

and ask Mashiur to distribute arms and ammo from Jessore police lines among the force.

"Amir-ul told me that making phone call from here [Bangabandhu's house] would be a problem as the matter needed secrecy," he said.

Murshid went home and phoned Mashiur, also an ex-minister.

In the meantime, rumours began whirling about an imminent military crackdown. Yahya Khan had boarded a Karachi-bound Pakistan International Airlines flight in absolute secrecy in the evening.

Dhaka University students and citizens in general put up barricades at different parts of the city.

After the phone call to Mashiur, Murshid left for Azimpur graveyard to offer prayers at the grave of his

heavy barricades at Farmgate. He took a left turn to Green Road and reached Kalabagan through a narrow ally to find a big tree felled ahead. He finally reached Bangabandhu's residence through the bridge on Dhanmondi Road-9.

It was around 10:00pm when Murshid reached Dhanmondi 32.

There was no one but a policeman on the ground floor. He took the stairs to the first floor. "As I stood before the open doors of his bedroom, Bangabandhu saw me and instantly said: 'We have become independent. They are coming to arrest me. I have decided to stay,'" he said.

"Those words still ring in my ears," added Haji Murshid, who was appointed the honorary aide to Prime Minister Sheikh Mujib after independence.

Bangabandhu was not picking up any.

Shubodh Mitra MCA called up and said, "Tell him [Bangabandhu] to move to safety".

The next one was from the wife of noted lawyer Sirajul Huq. "She said that Bangabandhu must leave ... otherwise they would kill him."

Barrister Moudud Ahmed also called, making the same request.

Dr Kamal Hossain and Amir-ul Islam came again sometime between 10:00pm and 11:00pm, he said.

Then it was Tabibur Rahman, a Chhatra League leader. A tall man, Tabibur requested Bangabandhu to leave, saying, "They will kill you."

But Bangabandhu was adamant that he won't leave. He replied: "If they do not get me, they will massacre all the people and destroy the

much like the way AL rebel candidate Jahangir Alam had given up his mayoral quest in Gazipur City Corporation elections on advice from the party high command in 2013.

Though Salim has not announced anything yet, he wrote on his Facebook page at 12:36pm yesterday: "In a bid to take part in the mayoral election in Dhaka South City Corporation, I submitted my resignation letter to parliament on Tuesday, but Speaker Shirin Sharmin Choudhury did not accept the resignation letter."

Salim's personal assistant Sohel Hawlader told The Daily Star yesterday that the lawmaker had met the speaker on Tuesday night after the day's parliament proceedings and submitted his resignation letter. "But the speaker did not accept it and instead asked him why he would resign when he plays a crucial role in making the House effective and vibrant."

After several attempts, this correspondent could reach Salim on his phone. "I will say everything, but not now," that's all he said.

Contacted, the speaker said Haji Salim had met her several times after her arrival home from abroad on March 23.

They discussed parliamentary issues and mayor elections but he neither spoke of resigning nor submitted any letter to this end, Shirin Sharmin Choudhury said.

"I haven't got any resignation letter from Haji Salim and I have no idea about it," she said, adding that she had heard about Salim's claim on his Facebook page.

Salim's aide Sohel said the prime

minister had called the DSCC mayor-aspirant to Gono Bhaban that very night and talked about the city elections. But Sohel claimed he didn't know the details.

Close relatives and friends of Salim said the lawmaker broke down following the PM's advice as he already had taken a number of steps in the last few days to woo voters.

According to them, Salim has made up his mind not to contest the polls as he would never go against Hasina's wishes.

# Mozaffar rejects Independence Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Awami Party (NAP) Chairman Mozaffar Ahmed, who was associated with the wartime Bangladesh government in 1971, refused to receive the Independence Award yesterday.



He said he refused to accept the award as he does not believe in politics that brings benefits.

The government had announced the names of eight award recipients for this year, recognising their outstanding contributions to their fields.

Everyone except for Mozaffar went to the award ceremony in the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over the award to the recipients.

The NAP chairman said he had joined politics after being inspired by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Mahatma Gandhi.

"I believe in politics that involves sacrifice, patriotism and humanity. But now there is politics based on conspiracy and business everywhere in the country," Mozaffar said.

He said, "My friend Mujib [Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] had offered me ministerial post several times, but I did not accept that. I don't do politics for posts, and I don't believe in such ethics."

# Medical board formed for Patuakhali journalist

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A four-member medical board has been formed to examine the condition of Prothom Alo's Baufal correspondent ABM Mizanur Rahman.

Dr AM Mojibul Haque, Patuakhali civil surgeon, yesterday formed the board and asked it to submit a report to him by March 30 after examining the journalist at 250-bed Patuakhali General Hospital at 10:00am the previous day.

The board was constituted in compliance with a court order, said Mojibul.

Bimol Chandra Sikder, Patuakhali district and sessions judge, on Tuesday ordered the jail authorities to form the medical board and submit a report on Mizanur's condition to the court by March 31.

On March 17, Baufal police arrested Mizanur from Kalaiya Bazar on charges of assaulting Assistant Sub-Inspector of Baufal Police Station Halim. The policeman filed the case the same day.

Mizanur alleged that he was tortured in custody. At one stage, he lost consciousness.

The following day, police produced the journalist before the Baufal Upazila Judicial Magistrate's Court that sent him to jail.

On Tuesday, the High Court asked the government and the police to show cause in two weeks why the law enforcers responsible for torturing Mizanur should not be punished.

# Haji Salim in deep water

FROM PAGE 1  
the elections as per electoral laws. But the speaker allegedly rejected it.

Moreover, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the AL chief, talked to Salim and advised him not to take part in the polls and continue as a parliamentarian, according to sources. Her party has already extended support for mayor aspirant Sayeed Khokon in Dhaka South.

Rumors ran rife yesterday that Salim would convene a press conference to announce his decision to quit the race,