## 'I have no way of going anywhere'

FROM PAGE 1

scene. He bought a flag near the stadium and fixed it to his car. A strange sense of accomplishment filled up his chest as he drove down to Dhanmondi Road 32 to meet Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Questions were crowding inside his head. Is this going to be true? Will the Bangalis finally get their right to rule? Will the talks between Bangabandhu and Yahya yield the results the whole nation is waiting for? Will the people of East Pakistan be able to determine their fate? Will they get the rightful share of what they deserved – development and political power?

It was only 7 in the morning. Yet people chanting slogans were coming in processions towards Bangabandhu's house. Some of them produced a huge Bangladesh flag and unfurled it atop the house.

Events in East Pakistan were advancing at a breakneck speed at that time. Legally Awami League, that had won the majority seats in the 1970

December election was supposed to form the government, ending 12 years of martial law. All was set for it as president General Yahya Khan called the assembly session on March 3. But he suddenly postponed it on March 1.

Bangalis erupted in protest. Bangabandhu declared an indefinite non-cooperation movement from the same day. Since then nothing was as before. Dhaka turned into a city of slogans. Offices and banks were shut down. Schools and colleges were closed. The Pakistan government had no control over anything in East Pakistan. Mujib became the de facto prime minister.

Pakistan junta then presented a new trick by calling a dialogue with Mujib on power transfer. It was later to be revealed that the dialogue was nothing but a way to buy time for a military crackdown on the Bangalis. FOOT DRAGGING

Yahya had arrived in Dhaka on March 15 and met Bangabandhu the next day. Mujib was visibly agitated about the postponement of the assembly session. He wanted lifting of martial law and power transfer to Awami League.

Yahya wanted to delay the issue by mentioning that this would create a legal vacuum. Bangabandhu and his team could be convinced that an interim arrangement could be made to avoid such vacuum before a final constitution is drafted.

And so on this March 23 morning, Dr Kamal and his team had a very important mission. They had to negotiate the draft of the provisional constitution for Pakistan with Yahya.

At 11:30 in the morning, Kamal and his team drove down to the President's House with Bangladesh flags fluttering on their cars to the obvious displeasure of the military guards and officers there.

Inside the President's House they met president Yahya's advisor MM Ahmed, who had been brought in with a team from West Pakistan to discuss the provisional constitution with the Awami League team. Ahmed was more or less amenable to the draft. But it was General Pirzada, PSO to president Yahya, who put his foot down.

Pirzada suggested that Ahmed sit with the AL economic team to examine the financial implications of the constitution that was drafted on the basis of AL's Six-point demand, a document for self-governance. Dr Kamal and his team sensed that it

was just another delaying tactic of the Pakistani junta. Are they doing it as part of some game plan? Or are they just doing it to delay the inevitable - handing over power to Awami League? For now Kamal and his team agreed to sit with Ahmed. In the evening, as they met again,

MM Ahmed handed a list of insertions in the draft. He agreed that East Pakistan could deal with its foreign trade. Tax collection and retention were a problem to be sorted out. From there the AL team came to

Professor Nurul Islam's residence

where the AL economic expert team

was continuously meeting and dis-

cussing things. The issues proposed by

MM Ahmed were presented before the

team. Long discussion was held on tax

collection and management of sepa-

rate foreign exchange account.

Because of the long economic depriva-

tion by West Pakistan, Awami League

wanted East Pakistan's full power on

tax collection and retention of foreign

seriously pondering these issues, news

came that president Yahya Khan was

absent from his residence the whole day.

He was busy in the cantonment oversee-

ing the last touches to Operation

Searchlight, the horrific military adven-

turism to crush the Bangalis' dream of

feel that time was running out as stu-

dents were getting impatient and agi-

tated. Frequent clashes with the military

were erupting place at various corners in

Bangabandhu and his team could

freedom through genocide.

As the Awami League leaders were

exchange.

the city. In Chittagong, port workers blocked the road and refused to unload arms the Pakistan government had brought on the MV Swat. Somehow the workers could sense that these same arms would be used against them. In Tongi and Joydevpur, many civilians were killed as the military opened fire on people obstructing military convoys. In Rangpur, the army and the public engaged in clashes. The situation in East Pakistan was very fluid.

## ANOTHER DAY WASTED

On the evening of March 24, the Awami League team was ready to leave for the President's House to resume the crucial discussion because time was running out. Before the team left, Mujib suggested Pakistan should be known as Confederation of Pakistan.

The proposal created a strong disagreement from the government team that wanted Pakistan to be named as Union of Pakistan. The Awami League team argued that a single word cannot be the stumbling block in the negotiation as the situation was getting worse

then they glanced at the heavy black telephone set in the corner, expecting the call.

The day wore out and yet that call from Pirzada about the meeting did not come. A sense of apprehension and gloom took over the leaders' minds. Other calls came though. Numerous

callers telephoned to pass information that the Pakistan army was taking all kinds of preparation for an imminent crackdown. A caller said Yahya Khan had just left Dhaka secretly. He had not used his official car to escape prying eyes. A little later, Sheikh Fazlul Hoque

Moni, nephew of Bangabandhu, came in. He informed Mujib that he was leaving Dhaka for Tungipara a little later. Londonbased Awami League leader Zakaria Chowdhury came in to say he was going to cross the border by night and fly to London. It seemed everybody was dispersing as fast as possible, sensing the looming apocalypse.

BANGABANDHU'S DIRECTIVE TO **TAJUDDIN** 

But they detoured and stopped at Dhanmondi 32 to see Bangabandhu one last time. Roads were already barricaded with felled trees. They had travelled through the Dhaka University area, painstakingly maneuvering the blockades. The students were barricading the

road with anything they could lay their hands on. The mood was grim. Bangabandhu's residence, which was full of milling people until the afternoon, looked dark and deserted now. Kamal and Amirul found him in the dining room with his wife.

Mujib came out and said impatiently, "Why haven't you gone to the old town as you were told to do?"

As he walked them to the door, Kamal and Amirul asked him what he would do now. Mujib said: "You leave that to me. From now, we are independent. Our people are united and will fight."

## 'I HAVE NO WAY OF GOING ANYWHERE NOW'

Bangabandhu looked a forlorn figure.

The lonely warrior standing bravely in the face of the inevitable.



Bangabandhu waving at a crowd (not in the photo) while Hasina looks on at the historic Dhanmondi-32 house on March 23, 1971. Right, two architects of Operation Searchlight -- Gen Rao Farman (L) and Gen Khadim Raja -- were busy finalising the plan to annihilate the freedom-loving Bangalis as Yahya Khan was buying time in the name of talks.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

town when the military struck and then cross the river and melt into the countryside to build resistance. It was getting eerily quiet. You could

Bangabandhu then told Tajuddin

Ahmed, Amirul Islam and Dr Kamal to

hide in the residence of an Awami

League supporter in the old area of the

to have become a ghost town. Around 8pm, Kamruzzaman, Capt Monsur Ali, Tajuddin Ahmed and Syed

hear the hands of the wall clock moving

in their eternal rounds. The city seemed

Nazrul Islam came in to meet Mujib again. Around the same time, Kamal Hossain returned home to find people waiting for him for the latest. Kamal told them that the military was about to

should go into hiding.

A LAST VISIT Kamal Hossain and Amirul Islam left hurriedly in a friend's car and moved towards Satmasjid road to pick Tajuddin Ahmed who was later to become the acting prime minister of Bangladesh government in exile.

launch an attack and that everybody

It was 11 and Bangabandhu had not had his dinner yet. His daughter Sheikh Hasina (who is now the prime minister) and son-in-law MA Wazed Mia, were on the rooftop, worriedly pacing up and down. Hasina was worrying about her father as he had not come upstairs yet. It was long past Dinner time. They usually would have dinner together around nine.

"Abba has not eaten yet," Hasina said. "Let's go down and bring him up."

As they descended, they found Bangabandhu standing at the foot of the stairs, talking to Sirajul Alam Khan, Shahjahan Siraj and ASM Abdur Rob, the three most prominent student leaders who had fired up the students with their rousing speeches.

After he was finished with them, Mujib hugged Hasina and said in an emotional voice: "Ma, I have not seen you the whole day." His eyes were bloodshot.

Around 11:30, the house help came up and said somebody named Jhontu was waiting downstairs to see Mujib.

"Oh, I was just thinking about him. Wajed, go down and bring him here," Mujib was eager to meet the visitor. Jhontu introduced himself as the younger brother of Zakaria Chowdhury, the Awami League leader who had been there in the day.

Jhontu held Bangabandhu in a tight embrace and said," Mujib bhai, the Pakistan army is coming to kill you. You have to leave this place right now. They are getting ready to enter Dhaka city with tanks, cannons and heavy machine guns."

Mujib wanted to know the details of the Pakistan army's planning.

Jhontu seemed to know a lot. He said the Pakistan army would attack Dhaka university student halls. They would crush the police headquarters and East Pakistan Rifles, shoot anyone found on the street and would capture radio and TV stations.

Bangabandhu listened raptly and then loudly called out for his daughters Hasina and Rehana. He told them to leave the house immediately and take shelter in another house rented a few days ago at Dhanmondi Road 8/A on the Satmosjid Road. It was Wajed Mia and Hasina who had scoured the city for the last 15 days and finally rented this house for 900 rupees, apprehending such attacks.

Wajed Mia asked Bangabandhu what would he do now and where he did he want to go. "I have no way of going anywhere

now. So if they want to kill me, they have to do it here. Kamal (Mujib's eldest son) has already slipped out. Jamal (his second son) cannot stay without his mother. So he will remain here." HASINA LEFT HOME

It was an emotional moment. Hasina and Rehana started crying, holding their father in a tight embrace. Wajed Mia quickly drove out of the

house in his car with a suitcase in the boot. It was dark outside. He noticed some unknown people suspiciously walking opposite the house by the lake. They seemed to be guarding the place. He saw people putting barricades

house at 12 midnight. Soon after, Hasina and Rehana came with their house help. Gun shots started a little later. They

on the street. He reached the rented

could hear long bursts from machine guns and heavy booms from cannons coming from the Pilkhana area.

The war had started.

Then they heard an army convoy rumbling towards Bangabandhu's house, probably to take him in. Or to kill him as Mujib had apprehended. They shuddered thinking of that tall, brave man who let everybody escape but himself remained in his station like a true leader.

[The report has been prepared on the basis of the books " Bangladesh: Quest For Freedom and Justice" by Dr. Kamal Hossain, " Bangabanhdu Sheikh Mujib Ke Ghire Kisu Ghotona O Bangladesh" by Dr. MA Wazed Mia and Mooldhara 71" by Maidul Hasan.]



The Awami League team wanted to finalise the draft that night so that the next morning it could be presented to Mujib and Yahya to sign. An important member of the Pakistan team, justice Cornelius agreed. But Pirzada again objected.

and that the issue could be sorted out

by Yahya and Mujib.

"No, we have some discussions this evening, you may meet tomorrow morning," he said. Pirzada added he would call in the morning with the time of the meeting.

THE CALL NEVER CAME

March 25 dawned with a lot of apprehension.

Bangabandhu stayed the whole day in the downstairs hall of his residence at Dhanmondi 32 with Kamruzzaman, Tajuddin, Captain Mansur Ali, Syed Nazrul Islam, Dr Kamal and Gazi Golam Mostafa. They discussed the future of East Pakistan, what the defeated leader of the Pakistan People's party Zulfikar Ali Bhutto might now do and many other things. Every now and

By 2021 maybe

FROM PAGE 1

According to a deal signed between the government and Ital-Thai in January 2011, the 21-km expressway from airport to Kutubkhali on Dhaka-Chittagong highway was scheduled to be completed in three and a half

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation stone in April, 2011. In the last five years, the government could only acquire some land, while the contractors began piling works in August last year.

Ital-Thai, a partner in the first public private partnership (PPP) project, signed a \$1.062 billion agreement with China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) in August 2014 after it failed to find fund.

Project Director Mohammad Ferdous told The Daily Star that the CRCC and Ital-Thai assured them of managing fund by April. "An announcement in this regard will be made very soon."

Contacted, transport expert Prof Shamsul Hoque of Buet, who is giving technical support to the expressway project, said he also heard about getting fund. "The contractors are spending money for piling works, which indicates that they are serious about the project. The expressway construction will get momentum once the fund problem is over," he said.

Asked about the delay in getting fund, he said financiers did not want confusion over a project's viability. "Investors always think about making profit out of the investment. So you must give them confidence," he explained.

Prof Hoque said the route design of the expressway would be slightly modified to reduce land acquisition complexities and avert conflict with other projects.

Meanwhile, the government too failed to complete land acquisition will manage finance, construct, operate and maintain the expressand remove structures along the way. The concession period will be 25 route that will run through the existing years, including 42 months of the rail track. There will be 31 ramps to get on and get down from the expressway. construction period.



It will be built in three phases -airport to Banani, Banani to Moghbazar, and lastly Moghbazar to Kutubkhali.

to invest if there were uncertainty or (7.5km stretch from airport to Banani) ble for buses, four times for six-wheel was done with the government fund, while construction of 90 piles, out of 810, was completed with the contractors' money, project officials said.

Land acquisition for the second phase (5.85km from Banani to Moghbazar) also began recently, while that for the third phase (6.43km from Moghbazar to Kutubkhali) is yet to begin.

Under the agreement, Ital-Thai completed by 2019.

them above the ground. Toll for endto-end journey on the expressway will be Tk 125 for cars, jeeps, microbuses Land acquisition for the first phase and light trucks. The rate will be doutrucks and five times for above sixwheel trucks, according to the initial estimate. However, the rates will now be re-

There will be 11 toll plazas, five of

fixed given the delay in the construc-

Visiting the project area last month, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said more than 10 percent of the piling works were done and hoped that the construction of the first phase will be

Once complete, the expressway would significantly ease the capital's traffic congestion.

পর বর্ষক আভিপারে TO JUSTIFY ধর্মার দায় শুরুধর্মান্তর WE ARE TONU

People from different walks of life at a demonstration at the TSC roundabout on Dhaka University Campus yesterday, protesting the murder of Sohagi Jahan Tonu, 19, in Comilla early this week. PHOTO: HABIBA NOWROSE

## Protests rage on over Tonu murder

From page 20

corners of the country. But how many of the culprits are being tried or pun- of Comilla police said that investigaished? ... We all have to rally behind tors believed Tonu had been killed the SP of Comilla, demanding arrest of the demand that all rapists be punished," she told The Daily Star.

Different socio-cultural and political organisations, including Dhaka University Mime Action and Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, staged rallies on the university campus to protest the incident.

The body of Tonu, an undergraduate student of history, was recovered from Moinamoti area on Sunday

night. assistant of Comilla Cantonment

Board, filed a murder case with

the next day.

Superintendent Shah Abid Hossain following an attempted rape. They the culprits in 48 hours, reports our would confirm it after getting the Comilla correspondent. autopsy report.

ater-group colleagues in Comilla claimed that she had been raped before being murdered. They also accused the local admin-

istration of playing a "dubious role" regarding the incident. Students from different educational

institutions, including Tonu's fellows Her father Year Hossain, an office at Comilla Victoria College, and activists of different socio-cultural platforms blocked a road near Pubali Comilla Kotwali Model Police Station Chattar in Comilla city, stopping traf-

fic for around two hours.

They also submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner and

Demonstrators also held a candle-However, Tonu's friends and the- lit vigil in front of Pubali Bank in Comilla city yesterday evening. Comilla Zilla Parishad administra-

tor, local politicians, theatre personali-

ties and police officials, among others,

if "the killers are not brought to book in 48 hours."

Demonstrations were also held in

addressed a rally there in the morning. Shahidul Haq, president of Adhuna Theatre in Comilla, said they would declare a tough agitation programme,

Mymensingh.