



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talks to an Indian war veteran during a reception at the Gono Bhaban yesterday evening. The programme was organised to honour 34 war veterans from India and Russia, now in Dhaka to join Bangladesh's 46th Victory Day celebrations.

PHOTO: PMO

## War veterans

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mines at Chittagong Port after the country's independence, shared his experience as a marine officer. He presented a book on the mine-sweeping operation to the PM.

He wished to translate the book into Bangla from Russian and donate its proceeds for the welfare of the people of Bangladesh.

GS Sihota expressed his heartfelt thanks to the PM for inviting them to the Victory Day celebrations. He said they brought here greetings from

everybody in India and also from the Indian defence forces.

Hasina thanked the war veterans for coming to Bangladesh on the eve of the Victory Day. She said Bangladesh will always remember their contributions.

People could not talk about the history of Liberation War as it was totally distorted after the assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975, she added.

She, however, said when her party

assumed office in 1996, her government started the process of remembering the foreign friends for their immense contributions to the war.

Hasina recalled the contributions of India and Russia in building the war-ravaged country after the Liberation War.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Harsh Vardhan Shringla, four serving military officers of India and officials of the Indian and Russian embassies in Dhaka were present.

The two superpowers-US and China were blindly supporting the Pakistani military regime that carried out one of the worst genocides in the world. The other superpower, Soviet Union, was backing India in an intense diplomatic war in 1971.

The Nixon administration left no stone unturned to enforce a ceasefire between India and Pakistan in December 1971 to save the Yahya regime from an imminent defeat.

Supported by its allies including China, the USA moved a number of resolutions in the UN Security Council from December 4 calling for an immediate ceasefire in East Pakistan. But it could not move further as every time Soviet Union vetoed the resolutions.

In the backchannel, Nixon's administration tried to convince China, also an ally of West Pakistan, in many ways to attack India. On the other hand, he continued mounting pressure on Soviet leaders to restrain India.

"If Indians continue their military operations, we must inevitably look toward a confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States," Nixon warned Soviet Union leaders on December 9, within week of beginning of the India-Pakistan hostilities during the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

But his warning had little effect on Soviet leaders. He expected an answer from the Soviets by December 12 but he got no response from Moscow to his warnings. They did not withdraw their support for India.

Nixon then considered the option of using nuclear weapons as he was concerned that the Soviets would intervene for India if China moved its troops along the Indian border in support of Pakistan, according to his interview with Time magazine.

His concern was based on substance. Fearing the worst from China, India had already strengthened its ties with the Soviets. In August 1971, it signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Soviet Union on the heels of Henry Kissinger's groundbreaking trip to China.

Indira Gandhi sent her man DP Dhar racing back to Moscow on December 11, carrying a personal message for the Soviet's premier.

The Soviet leadership stood by India, but cautiously, writes US journalist Gary J. Bass in his book "The Blood Telegram." Still, the Soviet ambassador in Delhi pledged that if China intervened against India, the Soviet Union would open its own border diversionary action against China," he writes.

In such an intense situation, on December 12, Nixon and Henry



PARTNERS IN POWER... Nixon, left, and Kissinger. They blindly supported dictatorial and genocidal regime of Gen Yahya Khan who ordered Pakistani marauding army to enforce the brutal scorched earth policy to thwart Bangalees' fight for independence.

PHOTO: ARCHIVE

As Nixon authorised the movement of the USS Enterprise task force to the Bay of Bengal, the Indian government sought assistance from the Soviet Union.

In response, the Soviet Navy dispatched two groups of cruisers and destroyers and a submarine armed with nuclear missiles from Vladivostok in between December 6 and 13 of 1971. The Soviet Navy had kept a close watch on the US Seventh Fleet. So the Seventh Fleet was unable to assist Pakistan after the Indian navy attacked Pakistani warships and Karachi harbor.

The Soviet Union also sent a very strong message to China and backed it up with the deployment of 40 divisions along the Sino-Soviet border which prevented China from attacking India.

"Richard Nixon brought the United States to the edge of another world war. His actions were deliberate; he operated in secret; and he lied to the American people about his actions," writes Pulitzer winning US journalist Jack Anderson in his book "The Anderson Papers" in 1973. The book documented the Nixon administration's tilt towards Pakistan and how Nixon planned for the use of nuclear weapons.

American people were against the Nixon administration's support to the genocidal Yahya regime. American citizens took to the streets to protest Nixon's policies on Bangladesh crisis.

"We are the ones who have been operating against our public opinion, against our bureaucracy, at the very edge of legality," Kissinger said in a conversation with Nixon on December 12, according to Robert Dallek.

The Nixon administration's diplomatic war, backchannel negotiations and dispatching the warships into Bay of Bengal could not protect the dictatorial regime of Gen Yahya from defeat in East Pakistan.

Gen Niazi, who led the Pakistani occupation army to carry out genocide in East Pakistan, surrendered to Joint Forces of Mukti Joudh and India on December 16, 1971, giving birth to independent Bangladesh.

Critics charged Nixon that his administration risked World War III by his allegedly reckless actions for protecting West Pakistan.

He however thinks otherwise. In his memoir in 1978, he claimed: "By using diplomatic signals and behind-the-scenes pressures we had been able to save West Pakistan from the imminent threat of Indian aggression and domination."

## Chinese national killed in Jessor

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OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A Chinese businessperson residing in Jessor was killed on Wednesday allegedly by his employees at the warehouse of his business in New Town area of the town.

Chang Hi Sung, 42, was murdered around 11:30am on Wednesday allegedly by two of his employees - Nazmul Hassan Parvez, 24, son of Mujibur Rahman, and Muktadir Rahman Raju, 21, nephew of Nazmul and son of Rafiqul Islam, said Illias Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Both the arrestees, who are from Chakpara village in Netrakona, were detained by police and confessed to have murdered their employer during primary investigation, he added.

Nazmul, an interpreter for Chang, and Muktadir attacked Chang with iron rods and stuffed his mouth with tissue papers before strangling him to death, the OC said.

Chang, residing in the Jail Road area in Jessor, had been running his import business of electric autorickshaw batteries over the past couple of years and he rented the warehouse about seven months back, he said, adding that Chang frequently travelled from Jessor to Dhaka where

### TALKS AT BANGABHABAN Khaleda to lead 10-member delegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP chief Khaleda Zia will lead a ten-member delegation to discuss with President Abdul Hamid the formation of a new Election Commission at Bangabhaban.

The party yesterday gave the names of the team members who will join the talks on December 18, said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and senior standing committee members Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Jamiruddin Sircar, Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman, Tariqul Islam, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Mirza Abbas and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury will accompany Khaleda, party insiders said.

On Monday, a letter was sent to BNP's Nayapaltan central office from Bangabhaban inviting the party to a dialogue with President Abdul Hamid on EC formation.

The letter, addressed to Fakhrul, requested the party to meet the president at 4:30pm at Bangabhaban on December 18. It also sought the names of those who will be there.

The president will hold meetings with the Jatiya Party on December 20,

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his wife Li Ing lives.

The Chinese businessman was beaten up and strangled. Among the two arrestees, Nazmul, during primary interrogation, confessed that they had committed the murder for money," Anisur Rahman, superintendent of police in Jessor, told The Daily Star.

Nazmul admitted that they had beaten up Chang with iron rods, the SP added.

Speaking with this correspondent, Chang's driver Mamun claimed Chang rebuked Nazmul and Muktadir over an overpriced bill they had submitted to him, and that incident might have prompted the duo to kill Chang.

"On Wednesday night, Li Ing called her husband, but she found his phone turned off. She then called Nazmul and asked him where his boss was. Nazmul told her that Chang had been missing," said OC Illias.

She then asked Nazmul to go to the local police station and report her husband's disappearance. In the meantime, she contacted the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka and left Dhaka for Jessor the same night, he added.

Police detained Nazmul as he was acting suspicious when he came to the

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Though he met somebody from Bangladesh after many years, he had no problem to remember the events 45 years back. It seemed he had told this story hundreds of times.

The elderly warrior now lives in Lucknow, India.

The retired officer has not yet retired from social works. He volunteers at a girl's college at Lucknow.

The memory of the day was fresh in his mind from that winter afternoon in 1971.

"How can I forget! Yes, I remember, I reached Dhaka in the afternoon of December 16, 1971," he said.

His troop reached the other side of the Lakhya river (Shitalakhya) on December 10.

"But we crossed the Lakhya (Shitalakhya) river and reached Dhaka at around 3:00 PM on December 16," he said.

"When the troop reached Dhaka, I was told that the surrender will take place at 4 o'clock. I started working to protect the area. General Niazi and his party came around 4 o'clock," he said.

Misra said they started their journey from Agartala.

"On November 29 we moved out from Agartala, Tripura. My corp commander Sougat Singh was very keen that we should cross the Meghna River as early as possible. And after that we fought several battles," he said.

"We had captured Akhaura on December 2," he said.

During that time the Pakistani army

Battalion crossed the river by helicopter early in the morning.

"I had the Ninth Battalions with me. I also had the Third Battalion but I left them behind," he said.

"The battalion was asked to stop the train movement from Dhaka and towards Dhaka. The train movement was stopped on December 8 and December 9. They were not allowed to move out from there."

And then, on December 8, the Third Battalion also crossed the Meghna under the cover of darkness.

"On December 9, we were ready to move towards Dhaka. After arrival of the Third Battalion, I wanted my men to move as fast as possible."

The local people helped the army. They brought in enough rickshaws for the Battalions to move. And there were no enemy troops in about 30 km area. On December 10, the troop reached the Lakhya river.

"We were told that the US Seventh Fleet had started from the Philippines for the Bay of Bengal," he said.

Meanwhile, the Indian air force made sure the sky was protected against the Pakistan air force.

And on the 11th we prepared to cross the river. But I was told that negotiations were going on and General Niazi may agree to surrender.

"So we were waiting on the other side of the river for orders. We were expecting a message," he said.

On December 7, the Ninth

river by country boat. But we did not want to use boats as the Pakistani army had taken position on the other side of the river. So I requested my commander to arrange helicopters for us," he said.

"So on the 16th we crossed the

river." They rode abandoned vehicles and tanks of the Pakistani army to reach the capital.

When asked whether he was present at the Racecourse ground when the Pakistani army surrendered, Misra excitedly said, "Of course! I had one battalion out there. After that Niazi and his party of three arrived. I was busy making sure the whole thing went without a hitch. I had to make arrangements for security of that party."

He was in Dhaka till March 1972 before returning to India.

"When I left, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had taken power. His government had been formed," he said.

Regarding the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Misra said it was a very sad incident.

"He was the person who had been the supreme leader behind the Liberation War of 1971," he said.

When asked if he had ever visited Bangladesh later, the Misra said he never visited Bangladesh again as he took an early retirement in 1973.

"My father was also in the army. I did not get much chance to spend time with him. And he wrote to me saying that he was not well. So I resigned and moved to Lucknow to stay with him."

Misra said though he had fought in the Liberation War of Bangladesh many years ago, he was still interested in Bangladesh.

"I think Sheikh Hasina has been doing very well. The relationship with India has improved a lot," he said.

Rajendra Nath Misra (C) is surrounded by cheering Bangalees as he leads first Indian troops into Dhaka on December 16, 1971.

PHOTO COURTESY: FAMILY

was retreating and destroying various equipment they had, he said.

"From there, the movement was straight for Brahmanbaria so that we could capture the bridge over the Meghna," he said.

"The local people were very cooperative. They wanted to help us cross the

river by country boat. But we did not want to use boats as the Pakistani army had taken position on the other side of the river. So I requested my commander to arrange helicopters for us," he said.

"On December 7, the Ninth