

10 January HOMECOMING DAY OF FATHER OF THE NATION

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

**PRESIDENT
 PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
 BANGLADESH**

Message

Today is the historic 10 January, the Homecoming Day of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Bangladesh achieved victory after a 9 month-long bloody war, but the victory of the Bangali nation was fulfilled only after the homecoming of Father of the Nation. On this memorable day of the Bangali nation, I pay my profound homage to Bangabandhu and pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

The Awami League had won absolute majority in the General Election of 1970. But as the Pakistani rulers were reluctant to hand over power, the people of the country started Non-Cooperation Movement under the leadership of Bangabandhu. On the fateful night of 25 March 1971, the Pakistani invading forces started genocide by executing 'Operation Searchlight' in accordance with their preplanned blueprint to annihilate the Bangalis. Under these circumstances, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared the independence of Bangladesh in the early hours of 26 March in 1971 and urged people from all strata to join the war of liberation. Immediately after that, the Pakistani forces arrested Bangabandhu from his residence, Road No. 32 of Dhanmondi and confined him in Mianwali jail of the then West-Pakistan. Bangabandhu had to undergo 9 months 14 days of rigorous imprisonment there. The liberation war was conducted in the name of Bangabandhu. He was the source of inspiration in the war of liberation.

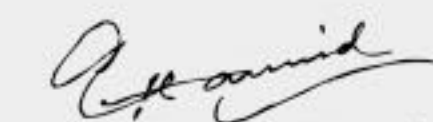
Bangabandhu became very emotional after setting his feet on the country's soil in the garb of a triumphant hero. In front of thousands of people at the Race Course Maidan, he declared, "The dream of my life has been fulfilled today, my Sonar Bangla is now free and sovereign State". He further said, "If anybody wants to snatch the independence of Bangladesh, then Mujib will sacrifice his life first to protect the independence". On 15 August 1975, he kept his word by shedding his fresh blood from the heart along with his family. The conspirators made a heinous attempt to wipe out the ideals of Bangabandhu and foil the independence and sovereignty of the country. But the Bangalis are a nation of heroes. As long as Bangladesh and the Bangalis exist, Bangabandhu will remain as the source of inspiration for all.

Bangabandhu cherished a true and deep love for Bangla, Bangali and Bangladesh. He was awarded death sentence during his imprisonment at Mianwali jail in Pakistan. Bangabandhu uttered, "I will say, while going to the gallows, I am Bangali, Bangla is my country and Bangla is my language. Joy Bangla". Such an example of profound love for country and people is rare in the world.

Bangabandhu sought economic emancipation of the Bangali alongside their political freedom. With this goal, he had started rehabilitation work in the newly-independent war-ravaged country. But that forward-march was brought to a halt through the assassination of Bangabandhu. The present government under the leadership of the illustrious daughter of Bangabandhu Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is working tirelessly for the progress and development of the country. Bangladesh is being considered worldwide as a 'role model' for development in various sectors, including education, health, agriculture and information technology. Bangladesh is now being gradually transformed into a 'Golden Bengal' of Bangabandhu's dream.

Bangladesh, in the meantime, has attained the status of lower middle income country and I am hopeful that it will become a middle-income country soon. With the continuation of the pace of development, I am sure, Bangladesh will be a developed and prosperous country by 2041 through concerted efforts of all. Let us advance our country by becoming united with the spirit of patriotism and liberation war. Let this be our pledge on the Homecoming Day of Bangabandhu this year.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.


Md. Abdul Hamid



cleaned pouring profuse blood
 the wound resembling the red China-rose
 on the back of and the sufferings, humiliation and the agony of
 the great, great ancestors.
 Overshadowing the deep lustre
 of all the diamond
 of the world
 Once in a winter afternoon rose the sun
 in your woe-stricken Bangla.
 Nay, you were not there beside us
 on that hour of pride
 As Nazrul observed we too had
 'eyes brimming with tears
 and loincloth full of flowers'
 at that greatest moment of history.
 We were bereft of
 your all-embracing presence
 during those nine months
 that speak of our highest glory
 and the tale of sorrow, deprivation and grief
 But you were there as you are there now firmly
 as the only light-house of ours.

Patient Waiting Asad Chowdhury

With the endless hope I was filled
 for I felt my shoulder enfolded
 in your passionate arms
 when out of the grave I came
 holding someone's muddy hands
 after burying father in a hungry grave.
 Bangla where the greatest hero of all the Bangalis
 was born during the last thousands of years
 was yet to come into being
 And
 The land sanctified by the waters of
 the Padma, Meghna and the Jamuna
 was not identified as our birthplace.
 And then
 travelling through the dark abyss of
 a host of centuries

As the vast land of Bangla
 Waits for the advent of 'Ashar'
 to be drenched with flood-waters
 and gazes at the welkin like a beggar.
 So for the nine months, nay, for nine
 centuries and nine millenniums
 we had been awaiting you-the 'Bangabandhu'
 The man to whom Castro
 attributes the title of the firm 'Himalayas'.
 The day when you came back
 after a long waiting
 you had tears in your eyes too
 you looked weak and sickly
 I longed for removing the unruly hair
 from your forehead...

Translation: Saera Habib

10 January 1972 A Day of Two-dimensional Significance

Dr. Syed Anwar Husain

There are a number of red-lettered days in the political annals of the Bangalis. One such day was 10 January of 1972. This day is significant on two counts. Firstly, the return of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to his homeland after a physical absence of ten months. The physical absence is being mentioned because he was all along present in the consciousness of the Bangalis. We know that the liberation war was fought in his name; he was the president of the first government (Mujibnagar Government) of Bangladesh. Secondly, he delivered a direction-setting speech on rebuilding the newly freed country immediately after coming back. The first significance was that of a huge achievement after ending prolonged worries and anxieties. The second significance related to an indication about tomorrow's Bangladesh.

The extraordinary aspect of Bangabandhu's return was that his survival was itself a miracle. That was because, Yahya Khan had hinted about killing him on the night of 26 March 1971. In an interview with a French periodical given on 1 September, Yahya identified Bangabandhu as an enemy of the Pakistani people. That Yahya wanted to kill Bangabandhu by any means was proved from the information provided in Robert Payne's book titled 'Massacre'. Yahya had said in July, "My Generals are putting pressure on me to arrange the trial and death-sentence of Sheikh Mujib in a military tribunal. I agreed and the trial will start soon". Finally, a press release was issued on 9 August mentioning that a secret trial would commence in a military tribunal on 11 August. Even before the finalisation of the verdict, Justice Shafi of Pakistan Supreme Court commented, "He will certainly be given death sentence". We know, a grave was also dug beside the isolated cell of Bangabandhu while the trial was in progress. Bangabandhu was ultimately handed down a death sentence in the verdict delivered on 3 December. But the final phases of the liberation war had already started by then. Being a victim of Pakistani attacks, India declared war on Pakistan on 3 December and got herself directly involved in the liberation war. Moreover, the world leaders (with the exception of China and USA) and the world opinion were vocal against the possible execution of Bangabandhu. As a result, the leader of Pakistan People's Party Zulfikar Ali Bhutto advised Yahya not to hang Bangabandhu. Bangabandhu's execution was suspended after the fall of Dhaka and the surrender of the Pakistani army on 16 December 1971. Then on 6 January 1972, Bhutto declared the freeing of Bangabandhu at a public meeting. After being released on 8 January, Bangabandhu went to London, and from there he returned to Dhaka via Delhi on 10 January.

Therefore, the return of Bangabandhu was like getting back a venerable leader who was headed for certain death. This leader who had defied death was our Father of the Nation. This leader was the architect of the immense pleasure the Bangalis were deriving that day on achieving independence. His absence therefore made the moment of winning freedom incomplete. It is needless to say that the situation in newly independent Bangladesh would have been precarious if he did not return dramatically. Consequently, his return also highlighted an assured future for an independent Bangladesh.

The second significance of 10 January 1972 was the address by Bangabandhu on that day. The address contained a future outline for the independent state of Bangladesh; in one word, a blue-print for building a liberated Bangladesh. Like the 7 March speech of 1971, the 10 January address was also short; and there was no prepared copy for the speech. It showed that the characteristics of a successful leader celebrated by the people are timely pronouncements and prompt decision-making.

In independent Bangladesh, Bangabandhu was transformed from a leader into a statesman; and that phase started from 10 January. The main characteristic of a statesman is that he develops deep insight for comprehending the society properly. Farsightedness emanates from this deep realization and feeling. A creative future becomes clear from the words and deeds of a statesman. We find that insightful and farsighted Bangabandhu in that 10 January speech. He was held captive in a Pakistani prison for nine months of the liberation war with his life under threat. He was completely separated from the events in Bangladesh. But after emerging from captivity and putting his feet on the soil of the liberated land, there was no way one could understand from what he said during that speech that he was disconnected from the country and its people for a long time. Actually, Bangladesh was his existence, and no situation could delink him from that identity.

Two tasks remain to be done once a country becomes independent: state-building, and nation-building. The country's organizational foundation is built through the process of state-building. On the other hand, the people of the country become united and grow as a cohesive community through the nation-building process. Therefore, ensuring these two processes is the primary responsibility of the leadership in an independent country. The situation was very difficult for Bangladesh at that time. But it was quite noticeable that Bangabandhu gave clear hints about the state-building and nation-building processes by drawing attention to a total of 15 topics during this 10 January speech.

At the very start of the speech, gratitude was expressed to those who had sacrificed their lives and made sacrifices for liberating the country. But how much that freedom was intertwined with his being was proved when he said, "Today, my lifelong desire has been fulfilled. Bangladesh is independent today". It may be noted that he had nurtured this resolve for independence for a long time. That is why he pronounced, "I knew, Bangladesh would one day become independent". At the same time, he did not consider this independence to be an achievement of any particular party or group. Rather, he acknowledged the contributions of "Bangla's peasants, workers, students, freedom fighters and the masses". He said, "It was you who had sacrificed lives, suffered pains". His acknowledgement was more detailed, "I salute all classes of people who participated in the realization of Bangladesh's independence. I salute the liberation forces, the guerrilla forces, and the bands of workers. I salute the struggling working classes, the peasants, the intellectuals". Needless to say, such a recognition and acknowledgement was commensurate with the status of a Father of the Nation. Up to the election of 1970, Bangabandhu was the leader of the Awami League. After winning absolute majority in the election, he became the undisputed leader of all Bangalis. But after independence, he was elevated to the status of Father of the Nation. The Father of the Nation cannot remain confined to party boundaries. Bangabandhu could articulate such confessions because he was conscious about his own standing as the Father of the Nation.

Bangabandhu had clear guidelines about the state character of independent Bangladesh. "We have many problems that need urgent solution. Please build up the devastated Bangla anew". "My endeavour was to see the people of Bangla live in a free atmosphere, be happy with their food and clothing". "I am speaking not as the president, nor as your leader, I am speaking as your brother. If our ordinary citizens do not get shelter, if the countrymen do not receive food, the youths do not find jobs, then this independence will become futile, it will not become complete". Side by side providing directions on socio-economic vision of independent Bangladesh, its ideological base was also indicated in the following manner, "Bangladesh will be an ideal country. And its basis shall not be any religion. The pillars of the state shall be democracy, socialism and secularism" (nationalism was added later on).

Bangabandhu had firm faith that the Bangalis would be able to build up an independent Bangladesh. He also had infinite pride about the potentials of Bangalis. Bangabandhu's sense of pride was expressed when he said that the Bangalis had proved wrong the lamentations of Nobel Laureate Poet Rabindranath Tagore claiming 'Bangalis have not matured' by liberating their motherland.

Bangabandhu accorded explicit recognition to the contributions of the international community to Bangladesh's liberation war in this address. He expressed his gratitude, especially to the Indian government, its people and the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. He also expressed gratefulness to Britain, Germany, France and the former Soviet Union. For justifiable reasons, there was no mention of China. But what was noticeable was his extension of thanks to the American people – not the government. The reason can be easily comprehended.

From the context of diplomacy, recognition for an independent Bangladesh was extremely important. That is why he made the clarion call: "I request all free nations of the world to recognise Bangladesh". There was also a request to the international community for assistance to rebuild the war-ravaged country. Demand was also placed for immediate membership of the United Nations.

It was natural that the attitude of the general masses towards the role of anti-liberation elements during the nine months of liberation war was vengeful after independence. Many incidents of violence had already taken place. But Bangabandhu had a word of caution: "Necessary actions will be taken at appropriate times against those people. They shall be tried. Repose that responsibility on the



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

Message

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

Bangladesh Awami League achieved 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.

Aiming at an ultimate target to free the Bangali nation, Bangabandhu in his address at the then historic Race Course Maidan on 7 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 the innocent Bangalis and carried out massacre on the night of 25 March in 1971. The Father of the Nation declared Independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of 26 March.

Just after his declaration of the independence, Bangabandhu was arrested and subsequently sent to a solitary confinement in Pakistani jail. He was subjected to inhuman torture in the jail where he had been counting moments for being executed after his death sentence was pronounced in a farcical trial. In the face of the freedom fighters, he rejoiced the spirit of the Bangali nation. He was the inspiration of the freedom fighters. Under his undisputed leadership, the Bangali nation earned the ultimate victory waging the 9-month solemnly-vowed war. The defeated Pakistani rulers were finally compelled to free Bangabandhu. The Father of the Nation returned to independent Bangladesh on 10 January in 1972. On his return, he delivered a speech before a mammoth gathering at Suhrawardi Udyan where he narrated the inhuman torture of the Pakistani military junta meted out on him. The Bangali Nation got back the Father of the Nation and their victory attained the fulfillment.

After his return, the Father of the Nation devoted all his efforts to rebuild the war-ravaged Bangladesh. He took the initiative for immediate withdrawal of the allied Indian forces from Bangladesh's soil. Responding to his call, various international organizations, including the United Nations and the friendly countries, quickly gave recognition to Bangladesh. The country earned the membership of the OIC in 1974. Bangladesh soon made its strong presence in the comity of nations under the charismatic leadership of Bangabandhu.


The assailants halted the march-forward of Bangladesh through killing the Father of the nation along with most of his family members on 15 August, 1975. The armed usurpers marred the democracy, defaced the Constitution and halted the path of progress and development.

The democracy has been reestablished after a protracted struggle and sacrifice. Awami League government has been working relentlessly to bring positive changes in people's living standard. Our per capita income has been risen to USD 1466. Foreign exchange reserve surpassed USD 32 billion. 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. We have ensured that elected representatives would rule the country.

Bangladesh is now the 'Role Model' in all fields of socio-economic fronts including agriculture, education, healthcare, communication, ICT, industrialization, trade and commerce. We will turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed one by 2041, InshaAllah.

Let us join our hands and build a non-communal, hunger-poverty-free and happy-prosperous Bangladesh being imbued with the spirit of liberation. Let us build a "Sonar Bangla" as dreamt by Bangabandhu where there will be no disparity between the rich and the poor and equal opportunity of prosperity will be available for all.

Let us 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

government". He asked the people not to lay hands on the Non-Bangalis. Because, "They are also our brothers; we want to show the world community, the Bangalis can make sacrifices not only for achieving freedom, they can also live in peace".

He gave directions about Bangladesh's relationship with Pakistan in this manner: "You please live in happiness. No more with you. Bangali can die, but cannot lose his freedom. I wish you well. Please accept that we are independent. You too live in freedom".

Two aspects were emphasized about Bangladesh's international outlook during this speech. It was known that the Muslim countries were hostile towards us during the liberation war. Some of them even provided active support to Pakistan against us. But Bangabandhu's wise and farsighted articulation was, "Please be informed everybody, Bangladesh is today the second largest Muslim country in the world and the position of Pakistan is fourth. Indonesia is first and India third". This utterance by the architect of a secular Bangladesh had a deep and far-reaching significance. He knew that petro-dollar would be needed for the reconstruction of war-ravaged Bangladesh. And secularism did not imply exclusion of religion. Besides, there was the question of recognition by Muslim countries. Under such circumstances, this kind of comment could not have been possible without a realism based on farsightedness.

Just as it was true that the contribution of India was huge in the liberation war, similarly it was certain that the indefinite stay of the Indian army on the country's soil would have raised questions; and questions were already being raised. But at the very commencement of such questions, Bangabandhu declared in unequivocal terms, "I had talks with Mrs. Gandhi in Delhi. The Indian army will go back whenever I tell them to". The Indian army went back home on 17 March 1972, in accordance with Bangabandhu's wishes.

It can be said in comparative perspective that the 7 March 1971 speech was indicative of the future struggles. On the other hand, the 10 January 1972 address was a call for settling down with all accomplishments after the end of that successful struggle. That is, both the speeches were future-oriented. But there were differences in substance. But both the addresses contained the statesmanlike insight and foresight of a venerable leader revered by the masses.

Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed