



CONTENTS

**Bangabandhu and Bangladesh:
Breaking the shackles of post-
colonial order**

Mofidul Hoque

Page-3

OPERATION RUPOSHI

One of Kamrul Alam Khan
Khasru's valiant missions

Minam Haque

Page-5

**A bloody war and how I
witnessed it**

Amanullah

Page-6

**Documenting Liberation through
his Lens**

Mishuk Ashraful Awal

Page-7

Sagat Singh — An unsung hero

Prakash Bhandari

Page-9

**Bangladesh Police in Liberation
War**

Muhammad Nurul Huda

Page-10

**Bangladesh Theatre and
Liberation War Plays**

Abdus Selim

Page-11

**Serenading the sublime souls of
the soil**

Zahangir Alom

Page-13

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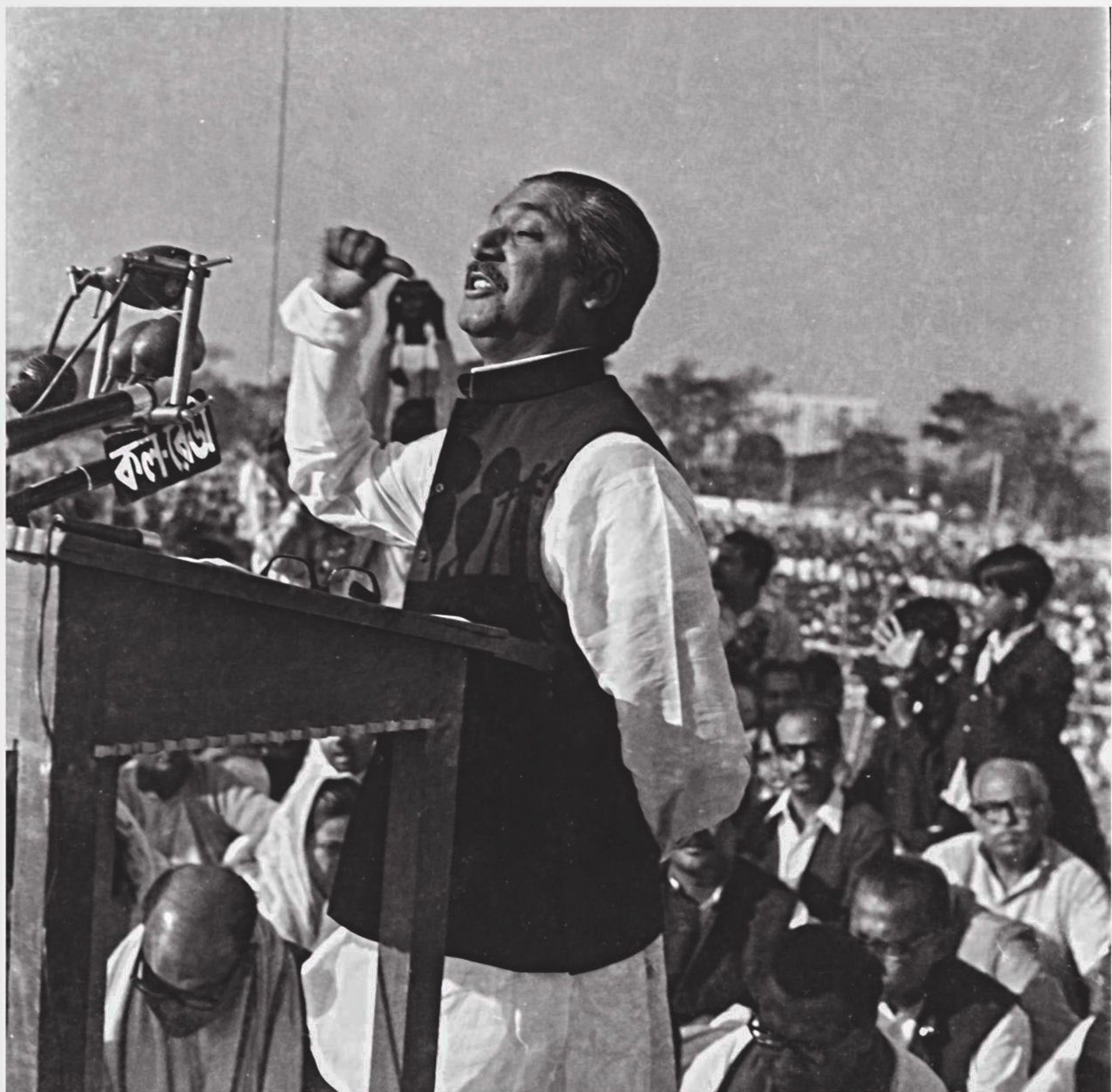
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**Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman giving speech at
Race Course on March 7, 1971.**

PHOTO:
JALALUDDIN HAIDER

EDITOR'S NOTE

At 48 Bangladesh has much to celebrate on Victory Day which is a day that always brings with it mixed emotions. While we feel immense pride at standing tall as an independent country we cannot forget the anguish of losing so many of our compatriots, our war heroes, our men, women and children who had to sacrifice so much to bring this freedom to us. We are humbled with indebtedness to our Liberation War martyrs and the Freedom Fighters who have survived, many of who have suffered immense economic hardship and physical disability as a result of the war. On this day we are grateful to all of them. It is a day for acknowledging the help and sacrifices of the friendly countries, India most particularly, without whose help victory would have been much longer in achieving. While we remember our freedom fighters and savour the victory that they brought us, it is also a time for introspection whether the aims, for which the blood of the martyrs was shed, have been achieved.

We have many things to be proud of. Some of our socio-economic achievements are second to none in the region. Poverty and infant mortality rates have come down. We have achieved self-sufficiency in food and that is no mean achievement for we had once been touted a "bottomless basket". The benefits of education have reached all corners of the land and because of the rapidity with which digitalisation is happening, we now live in a connected society that has opened up multifarious avenues for the development of the country. The RMG sector has blossomed opening up employment opportunities for millions of women and we are now a major contender in the global order of apparels.

We must, however, take a step back and introspect to wonder why the benefits of economic growth have not been equitable. Why the gap between rich and poor widens with each passing year. The threat of religious extremism, although contained, is trying to subvert the very reason why we took up arms against Pakistani forces. So, while we rejoice and grieve, we must also resolve to come together as a nation to cut across religion and the political divide to thwart forces that would want to destroy the very ethos on which our nation has evolved.

Mahfuz Anam
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