

THE DARK NIGHT

memories of 25 March 1971

On 1 March, 1971, General Yahiya Khan, the then-president of Pakistan, announced the indefinite suspension of the General Assembly that was scheduled for 3 March, 1971. I was watching a cricket match between Pakistan and New Zealand at the Dhaka Stadium when the news broke out.

Upon hearing the news, an unprecedented reaction engulfed the spectators. The crowd turned into a raging mass, a huge hue and cry with nationalistic slogans soon filled the galleries and echoed around the cricked field. Some of the spectators collected the newspaper and set those heaps of paper on fire.

The suspension of the first national assembly session at Dhaka by President Yahiya led to a dreadful consequence, beyond the imagination of the people of Pakistan, and one which would change the course of history forever.

On 7 March, 1971, Bangabandhu delivered his historic speech at Ramna Racecourse in front of a colossal crowd of thousands of eager people, and this became the turning point for the Bangladesh Liberation movement.

My friends and I, along with thousands of others, marched and joined this historic assembly chanting political slogans. His speech inspired people and gave them light and hope amid the darkness of political conspiracies. Bangabandhu told the people that this struggle was for freedom and liberation.



A non-cooperation movement against the Pakistan government started as directed by Bangabandhu. All government offices and bodies, as well as business, other than emergency services, were shut down. Meanwhile, President Yahiya negotiated



with Bangabandhu to resolve the political crisis. Yahiya was seemingly killing time in collusion with his political partner, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, as a part of a far-fetched conspiracy to keep political power with them.

As the issue of transferring power became more and more imminent, a political crisis threatening to tear apart everything was brewing. Ultimately, the political crisis remained unresolved, and as a consequence of the Yahiya and Bhutto conspiracy, Operation Searchlight and the genocide of Bangladesh became a grim reality.

25 March, 1971

The atmosphere was tense that evening of 25 March, 1971 and numerous rumours circulated — with ominous warnings for what was to come that night. We were gathering at Mailbagh crossing, and mingling with the bewildered crowd. Some groups were chanting slogans and waving the Bangladesh flag.

People were getting contradictory information from one another, precipitating confusion in the air. Some of my friends were at the meeting with the revolutionary council members and confirmed the

rumours to be true — the army would crack down on Dhaka at night. An unknown fear gripped the people's minds.

Throughout the entire month of March 1971, we had received secret guerrilla training. We were recruited from among the most trusted members of the Student League, the student wing of Awami League. We were trained with dummy rifles, a kind of wooden piece carved into the likeness of a 303 single fire rifle usually used by the police. During the evenings of the turbulent days of March, theoretical training classes were taken by a retired Bengali army officer.

Based on the training that we received, on the evening of 25 March, we organised the people and erected barricades on the major roads to stop the advancing platoons of the army in their armoured vehicles. A strong sense of Bengali nationalism permeated the volatile political atmosphere. People from all walks of life united to halt the advancing army.

There were some steel pipes stacked beside the road. During that period, there used to be strips of empty land on both sides of the roads with rain water drainage facilities; many company vehicles and heavy

CONTINUED TO PAGE 10

HOROSCOPE



ARIES (MAR. 21-APR. 20)

New methods will make war much faster. Passion will be your only answer. Listen to reason. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



TAURUS (APR. 21-MAY 21)

Entertainment should include physical activities. Travel will be exciting. Go after your goals. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



GEMINI (MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Sign up for mentally stimulating courses. Your romantic endeavours will be successful. Don't let anything interfere with work. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



CANCER (JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Believe in your talents. Complete your hobbies. Don't be afraid to pursue unfamiliar grounds. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



LEO (JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Don't manipulate emotional situations. You'll be detail oriented this week. Do something together. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Curb your stubborn nature. You are best to be discreet. You will meet work goals this week. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



LIBRA (SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Seek counsel from someone you trust. Your partner will be irritable. Put your money away for emergencies. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



SCORPIO (OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

You may receive false information. You can easily motivate others. Keep your feet on the ground. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

You will do well with work this week. Sudden changes may surprise you. Pamper yourself. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Don't get into debt. Try to avoid conflict by any means. Make changes that will enhance your appearance. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



AQUARIUS (JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Look into expanding your perception. Look for alternative methods for work. Being overly generous wont impress anyone. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



PISCES (FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Don't overindulge. Make financial deals this week. Your partner may not be honest with you. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.