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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
BANGLADESH

Message

Today is 26th March, our Independence and National Day. This year we are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our Independence. On this occasion, I extend my heartfelt greetings and warm felicitations to my fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

On this historic day, I remember with profound respect the architect of our independent Bangladesh, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. On the fateful night of March 25, 1971, the invading forces of Pakistan suddenly attacked the unarmed Bangladeshis. In the early hours of March 26, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman officially declared the Independence of Bangladesh. We achieved an independent and sovereign Bangladesh through a nine-month long liberation war. I recall with deep respect the millions of martyrs who sacrificed their lives in the War of Liberation and we achieved our Independence for their supreme sacrifice. I also recall with deep reverence our Four National Leaders, valiant freedom-fighters, organizers, supporters, foreign friends and people from all walks of life who made contributions to attain our right to self-determination and freedom movement.

We have achieved our great Independence through huge sacrifices. Bangabandhu always cherished a dream of building a happy and prosperous country along with attaining political emancipation. The present government has been rendering untiring efforts in materializing that dream of Bangabandhu. Today, Bangladesh is moving towards the highway of development at an inexorable pace. We have achieved enormous success in various areas of socio-economic development including poverty alleviation, education, health, human resources development, women empowerment, reduction of child and maternal mortality rates, elimination of gender discrimination and increase in average life expectancy. Rate of poverty has been dropped. Per capita income has tripled over the past decade. The Padma Bridge, being constructed by our own resources, is now completely visible. Works on Metro Rail, Payra Deep Sea Port, Kamafuli Tunnel, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport's Third Terminal and Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant are also progressing uninterruptedly. In various indicators of economic and social development, Bangladesh has been able to surpass not only the neighboring countries of South Asia, but also many developed countries.

Despite the negative impact of the Corona pandemic on the world economy, due to the timely and courageous steps taken by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the government has been able to maintain the economic growth by countering the effects of Corona. Huge amount of remittances sent by expatriate Bangladeshis has made an important contribution to keep the wheel of the economy rolling during this time. The government has announced 23 stimulus packages worth taka 1 lakh 24 thousand crore to keep the wheel of economy rolling. Arrangements have also been made to provide COVID-19 vaccine. Bangladesh ranks first in South Asia and 20th in the world in the 'COVID Resilience Ranking' compiled by the US news agency Bloomberg for successful handling of corona pandemic, economic revival and keeping the livelihoods running. Through this, Bangladesh's image has been upheld around the world.

Recently, Bangladesh has received the final recommendation from the United Nations to her emergence from a least developed country to a developing one. It is a unique gift for the nation at the juncture of 'Mujibbarsho' and the 'Golden Jubilee' of our Independence. With the continuation of development process, Bangladesh will turn into a developed and prosperous country in the world by 2041, Insha Allah.

In pursuing our diplomatic objectives, the government has been consistent in upholding the principle of "Friendship to all, malice towards none" as enunciated by the Father of the Nation. Our achievement in the international arena, including the establishment of world peace, is also commendable. Despite being a densely populated country, Bangladesh has set a unique example of humanity in the world by sheltering millions of Rohingyas who have been tortured and forcibly deported from Myanmar. In Bhasanchar, accommodation has been provided with all kinds of facilities for the Rohingyas. Bangladesh believes in a peaceful solution to this problem. I call upon the United Nations and the international community, including Myanmar, to take early and effective measures for permanent solution to this problem.

In order to achieve the desired goal of Independence, we must ensure people-oriented and sustainable development, good governance, social justice, transparency and accountability. Forbearance, human rights and rule of law have to be consolidated for institutionalizing democracy. National Parliament will have to be turned into the centre of hopes and aspirations of the people. The ruling party as well as the opposition should play a constructive role in this regard in the parliament.

Bangabandhu is the source of eternal inspiration for the Bengali nation. The government has extended the period of 'Mujibbarsho' till December 16, 2021 to celebrate the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation grandiosely at home and abroad. On the eve of 'Mujibbarsho' and the Golden Jubilee of our Independence, with the joint efforts of all, may our beloved motherland become a developed country free from hunger and poverty - this is my expectation on the great Independence Day.

Joi Bangla.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Md. Abdul Hamid

Golden Jubilee of Independence: Bangladesh and Bangabandhu Entwined Inseparably

Anupam Sen

The golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence is being celebrated today. The birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman also ends this month. Two dates of this month – 17 March and 26 March – are written with golden letters in our history. We are celebrating the golden jubilee of our independence today on 26 March. We also celebrated the birth centenary of Bangabandhu with infinite pride. Those who joined the liberation war, and those from our new generation who are celebrating the fifty years of independence are all co-sharers of a unique and everlasting glory.

When Pakistan was created at midnight of 14 August 1947 after the cessation of British rule, the inhabitants of East Bengal thought they got independence. But they did not get real freedom. The Bangladeshis really achieved independence on 26 March 1971 after a thousand years' existence by establishing their own state, where people were made the source of all power. After presenting the first constitution of the Bangladesh at the constituent assembly on 4 November 1972, Bangabandhu had said, "It is probably the first instance in Bangla's history that Bangladeshis are being given their first constitution. Not probably, it is really the first time". This constitution declared the country's citizens as the source of all powers of the state. It was moreover declared that Bangla would be the sole state language.

The freedom of the Bangladesh – the independence of Bangladesh – was a long-term outcome of the Bangladesh' language movement. Bangabandhu himself said this during the post-independence era. His role in the language movement was pioneering, memorable. The then student leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the main initiator of the founding of East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League on 4 January 1948. It was this Muslim Chhatra League which formed the 'language action council' and raised the demand for according Bangla the status of a state language in Pakistan. Bangabandhu discharged the main responsibility for enforcing the strike that was called on 11 March 1948 to realize this demand. He was arrested on that very day along with 70-80 of his colleagues who were involved in that movement. Through this arrest, the 13 years of his remaining behind bars during 23 years of Pakistan's existence also commenced.

The Pakistan Constituent Assembly drafted a constitution in 1956 after nine years of the creation of Pakistan. But no election was allowed to be held in accordance with

that constitution. The civil-military bureaucracy of Pakistan thought that it would not be possible to suppress East Pakistan if a free and fair election was held. For this reason, the president of Pakistan Iskandar Mirza suspended the constitution of Pakistan on 7 October 1958 and imposed martial law throughout the country. Ayub Khan then deposed Iskandar Mirza on 27 October and declared himself as the martial law administrator. Bangabandhu was arrested immediately after the imposition of martial law. Whenever the sword of the West Pakistani rulers fell on the Bangali people, the symbol of Bangladesh' rights – Bangabandhu – was instantly sent to prison. Ayub Khan presented Pakistan with yet another constitution in 1962. But the people did not get any real democratic rights. The shackle of economic exploitation of East Bengal was not relaxed the slightest through this. Rather, it was tightened in many areas. East Pakistan remained completely unprotected during the Indo-Pak war of 1965. There was not even a division of soldiers for defending East Pakistan. A conference of Pakistan's opposition parties was convened in Lahore on 6 February 1966 in protest against the Ayub-Lal Bahadur Shastri ceasefire agreement for ending the war. Bangabandhu presented his 6-points during this conference. Bangabandhu put forward these demands for freeing the Bangladeshis of East Pakistan from the naked colonial exploitations of West Pakistanis. All Bangladeshis, especially the new generation, should know why Bangabandhu raised the 6-point demands.

Although the Bangladeshis accounted for 56 per cent of Pakistan's population, the centres of everything including the military, economy and politics were based in West Pakistan. A lion's share of the annual budget of Pakistan was spent in West Pakistan; and in some years about 50 per cent of the budget was spent for defence. Pakistan built up a strong defence force in this way.

According to available data, there were 2,220 military officers from West Pakistan, but the number of Bangali military officers from East Pakistan was only 80. It shows how nakedly discrimination was practiced between the two wings in the defence sector. Similar discriminations were observed in the area of central civil servants. Whereas there was not a single secretary from East Pakistan, the number of West Pakistani secretaries was 19. The total number of civil servant officers was 690. But there were only 80 from East Pakistan! Although there were about 400 thousand soldiers in the Pakistani military in 1970, the number of Bangali soldiers from East Pakistan was only about 20 thousand.

The magnitude of economic exploitation perpetrated by the civil-military bureaucracy of Pakistan can be gauged when we recall that the GDPs of East and West Pakistan were 12,374 million rupees and 12,091 million rupees respectively during 1949-50. While during 1969-70 the GDPs of East Pakistan and West Pakistan stood at 22713 million rupees and 31563 million rupees respectively. But the subsequent disparity was created by transferring the resources of East Pakistan to West Pakistan. The main source of foreign exchange for Pakistan during the 1950s and 1960s up to 1967-68 was jute and jute goods. About 70 per cent of Pakistan's export income during the first decade and about 60 per cent during the second decade were earned by East Pakistan. But East Pakistan's share in imports remained confined within 30 per cent of the total. East Pakistan had huge surpluses in external trade (with the exception of 1963-64, 1964-65) over these two decades. But the import deficits of West Pakistan were met from these huge surpluses of East Pakistan. Mainly coming from the jute sector, this trade surplus of East Pakistan was used as the primary capital for massive development of West Pakistan. The reserves for this primary capital were created by looting the fruits of labour of the East Pakistani peasants. At that time, the value of Pakistani rupees was kept artificially high. The exchange rate of 1 US dollar was 4.76 Pakistani rupees. But the open market rate was 8 Pakistani rupees. As a consequence, while the jute farmers were paid at the rate of 4.76 rupees, the industrialists and businessmen were paid at the rate of 8 rupees. As a result, the deprivation and exploitation of jute farmers was 3.24 rupees per dollar. As all the jute mill owners and jute cum jute goods traders like Adamjee, Bawani, Dawood, Amin etc. were based in West Pakistan, their capital was invested for developing the industries, services and agricultural sector of West Pakistan.

Pakistan received foreign aid worth 6,500 million US dollars over two decades during 1950-70. Of this, 4,558 million dollars were spent in West Pakistan, while only 1,942 million dollars in East Pakistan. Bangabandhu placed the 6-point demands for severing this nakedly colonial bondage of Bangladesh with West Pakistan, and to bring about economic, political and cultural emancipation of the Bangladeshis.

The principal demand of the 6-points was that, Pakistan would be a federation. There would be two separate exchangeable currencies for East and West Pakistan, and there would be two separate accounts in the central bank for them, so that resources earned by one region could not be transferred to the other. The role of central government would remain limited to foreign affairs and defence. The provinces would have unlimited powers in matters of foreign trade. The requirement for foreign exchange at the centre would be met through mutual consent of the provinces. The provinces would also have the power to form militias of their own. It was clear that these 6-points had the vision of two states. Rejecting the 6-points, Ayub Khan told Bangabandhu that if he did not withdraw the six points, then the language of arms would be applied for forcing him to do so. But Bangabandhu did not backtrack.

An independent Bangladesh could emerge because the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu did not withdraw the 6-points. It is for this reason that Bangladesh and Bangabandhu are inseparably intertwined. The independent existence of two regions was to be given shape through those six points. The then president of Pakistan Yahya Khan and the main political leader of West Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to Dhaka in March 1971 for eliciting Bangabandhu's agreement to withdraw those demands.

Bangabandhu claimed at the very start of the greatest speech in world history, which amounted to a declaration of independence, on 7 March 1971 at Dhaka's Racecourse Ground in front of a million-strong audience that the Bangladeshis were deprived of all rights – cultural, political and economic. Bangabandhu was not ready to compromise on the question of freedom from exploitation and bondage. Therefore the last words in his epic speech were: "The struggle this time is for our emancipation, the struggle this time is for our independence". That speech reflected a blend of extraordinary pragmatism and heartfelt deepest emotions. He declared independence through that speech, but it was not possible to brand it as a secessionist address. That is why, when the Pakistani military struck on 25 March night and started genocide in Bangladesh, the world community and almost all countries of the world held Pakistan responsible for the situation and sought the release of Bangabandhu.

The Bangladeshis achieved their independence on 16 December 1971. Bangabandhu returned to independent Bangladesh on 10 January 1972 from Pakistani prison as the symbol of hopes and aspirations of the countrymen. He was soaked with tremendous love of the people. He inherited a devastated land. But the Father of the Nation made the shattered economy stand up within one year. He rebuilt the thousands of destroyed culverts, the Bhairab and Harding Bridges. With Soviet help, he revived the Chattogram Port within one year by removing some sunken ships and mines. The hindrance to external trade was thereby removed. About 10 million people who had taken shelter in India as well as around 15 million internally displaced citizens were rehabilitated. He constituted the Planning Commission swiftly for rejuvenating a collapsed economy. He presented an extraordinary constitution to the nation on 4 November 1972 within 10 months of Bangladesh becoming independent. The people were declared the owners of the state in that constitution. It was declared that the democracy of Bangladesh would be for the exploited, not the exploiters. And there were three pillars of the state: socialism, secularism and Bangali nationalism.

15 August 1975 was an indelibly ignominious and dark night in the thousand-year-old history of Bangladesh. The shadow of that dark night still lingers. But the deep darkness started to recede when the eldest daughter of the Father of the Nation Sheikh Hasina returned to this soil on 17 May 1981. She came back as a 'flame of democracy'. Getting elected in 1996 by representing those on the side of the liberation war after a long gap of 21 years, and again coming back to power in 2009, the Desh-Ratna Sheikh Hasina started a march for development in order to accord human prestige to all citizens of this country. As a result, the country's per capita income rose threefold to 2,064 US dollar today from a mere 770 US dollar in 2007.

Bangladesh is today a miracle in the realm of global development. Growth rate in Bangladesh has remained positive, when most of the countries of the world have recorded negative growth rates due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Whereas growth rates in India and Pakistan were negative during 2019-20 financial year, Bangladesh's growth rate was about 5.2 per cent. Bangladesh is no more an agro-based country; its economy is mostly propelled by the services and industries sectors. A majority of workers in Bangladesh are now employed in these two sectors. Electricity has now reached about 96 per cent of villages in Bangladesh. The civic facilities have also been taken to the doorsteps of rural people. About 130 million people now use the internet, and even more people use mobile phones. If this unprecedented development march of Bangladesh continues, then Bangladesh would be accorded the status of a developed nation by the middle of this century. The Bangla of Gold as dreamt by Bangabandhu would then materialise.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

PRIME MINISTER
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH

Message

Today is the 26th March-our great Independence Day. Bangladesh completes 50 years today since its independence. I extend my heartfelt greetings to the countrymen and expatriate Bangladeshis on the occasion of the golden jubilee of great independence.

The 26 March is the day of establishing self-identity of our nation. It's the day of breaking the shackles of subjugation. On this Independence Day, I recall with deep gratitude the Greatest Bangalee of all times, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose undisputed leadership we have earned our independence. I pay my tributes to four national leaders, three million martyrs and two hundred thousand dishonoured women of the War of Liberation. My homage goes to all the valiant freedom fighters, including the wounded ones. I extend my sympathies to those who had lost their near and dear ones, and were subjected to brutal torture during the Liberation War. I recall with gratitude our foreign friends who had extended their support during our liberation war.

On the occasion of the golden jubilee of independence, colorful programs have been chalked out from 26 March 2021 to 16 December 2021 and the period from 17 March 2020 to 16 December 2021 is being celebrated as 'Mujib Year' marking the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation. In the wake of corona virus pandemic, the Golden Jubilee of Independence and the 'Mujib Year' are being celebrated avoiding public gathering following the protocols of hygiene.

The Bangalee nation had fought against oppression and deprivation of Pakistani rulers' for long 23 years under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib. They were compelled to hold general elections in 1970. Bangladesh Awami League led by Bangabandhu won absolute majority in the elections. But the Pakistani rulers adopted repressive measures instead of handing over power to the majority party representatives. Calling for independence at the then Racecourse Ground on 7 March 1971 Bangabandhu declared, "The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation; the struggle this time is the struggle for independence, Joi Bangla." He instructed the Bangalee Nation to resist the enemies.

The Pakistani occupation forces unleashed a sudden attack and started massacring innocent and unarmed Bangladeshis on the fateful night of 25 March 1971. They killed thousands of people in different places, including Dhaka. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman formally proclaimed the Independence of Bangladesh at the first hour of 26 March 1971. Bangabandhu's proclamation was spread all over the country through telegrams, tele-printers and EPR wireless. The international media also had circulated Bangabandhu's proclamation of Independence. The first Government of Bangladesh took oath on 17 April 1971 in Mujibnagar with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as President, Syed Nazrul Islam as Vice President, Tajuddin Ahmed as Prime Minister, Capt. M Mansur Ali and AHM Kamaruzzaman as ministers. The resistance war against the occupying forces began. After a 9-month of blood-shedding liberation war, the final victory was achieved on 16 December.

In the 50 years since independence what we have achieved has been achieved by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Awami League. In just three and a half years of his government, he rebuilt the war ravaged country. Destroyed roads, bridges, culverts, railways, ports were rebuilt to revive the economy. In 1975, the GDP growth rate exceeded 7%. Bangladesh gained recognition from 116 countries and got the memberships of 27 international organizations.

Our constitution was made on the basis of the spirit of the liberation war under his direction within just 10 months. In just three and a half years, he took war-torn Bangladesh to the list of least developed country. While Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was advancing to build an exploitation-deprivation-free non-communal democratic 'Sonar Bangla' overcoming all obstacles, the anti-liberation forces brutally killed him along with most of his family members on 15 August 1975.

After the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, the development and progress of Bangladesh came to a halt. The politics of killing, coup and conspiracy started in our beloved motherland. The assassins and their accomplices promulgated the 'Indemnity Ordinance' to block the trial of this heinous murder in the history.

Getting the public mandate in 1996, Bangladesh Awami League formed the government after long 21 years. After assuming the office, we took the initiatives to establish Bangladesh as a self-respectful in the comity of nations. Through the introduction of social safety-net programs, poor and marginalized people are brought under government allowances. We made the country self-sufficient in food production with special emphasis on agricultural production. The Ganges Water Sharing Treaty was signed with India in 1996. We signed the historic Peace Accord in 1997 with the aim of establishing peace in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. By repealing the 'Indemnity Ordinance', we started the trial of Bangabandhu's assassination.

Forming government in 2009 in consecutive three-terms, Bangladesh Awami League has relentlessly been working to improve the fate of the people inspired by the spirit of the great liberation war. We are implementing the unfinished works of the Father of the Nation. Today, Bangladesh is self-reliant in food production. The poverty rate has come down from 42.5% to 20.5% in the last 12 years. Our sovereign rights over a vast area in the Bay of Bengal have been established through the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes with Myanmar and India. The implementation of the Bangladesh-India Land Boundary Agreement has put an end to the protracted inhuman life of the enclave people. The nation has become free from stigma by executing the verdict of Bangabandhu murder case. The trial of war criminals continues and the verdict is being executed.

We have formulated the Second Perspective Plan for 2021-2041 and adopted the 8th Five Year Plan. We have started the implementation of 100-year 'Delta Plan 2100' for the first time in the world. Today, the benefits of 'Digital Bangladesh' have been expanded from urban to remote village level.

On the occasion of 'Mujib Year', some 8 hundred 92 thousand homeless people are being provided houses. 70 thousand houses have already been handed over. Another 50 thousand houses are under construction. A total of 9 lakh 98 thousand 346 families have been provided accommodation since 1996. The civic facilities of the city are being delivered to every village. 99% people are taken under electricity coverage. To keep the economy going offsetting the impacts of Coronavirus, we have 4.44% of our announced 23 stimulus packages worth Tk 1.24 lakh crore, which is 44% of our GDP.

The independence earned through supreme sacrifices of millions of people is the greatest achievement of Bangalee Nation. To ensure that the achievement remains meaningful, all have to know the true history of our great Liberation War and respect the spirit of independence. The spirit of the Liberation War has to be propagated from generation to generations.

The persistent efforts of the last 12 years of the Bangladesh Awami League government have brought the final recommendations for Bangladesh to become a dignified developing country on the eve of the Golden Jubilee of Independence. This is a huge achievement for us.

Under the leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, the brave Bangladeshis liberated the country through the war of liberation within just nine months. I firmly believe that if this trend of development continues, Bangladesh will soon be established as a developed-prosperous country in the world, InshaAllah.

Let us take oath on this auspicious occasion of the golden jubilee of independence-imbued with the spirit of the Great War of Liberation, we all together will build hunger-poverty-illiteracy-free Golden Bangladesh as dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina
Sheikh Hasina