



Message

December 16th is our great Victory Day. On this day in 1971, we achieved our long-cherished victory after a long struggle and bloodshed war. This year, we are celebrating the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of Independence in a festive mood, which has added a unique dimension to the Victory Day celebration of Bangladesh. On this joyous occasion, I extend my sincere felicitations and warm greetings to my fellow countrymen living at home and abroad.

Today, I recall with profound respect the greatest Bangalee of all time Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I pay my deep homage to the valiant freedom fighters who made supreme sacrifice in the War of Liberation for the cause of country's Independence. I remember with gratitude the four national leaders and the people of all walks of life, including the heroic freedom fighters, the organizers and supporters of the Liberation War, foreign friends, war-wounded individuals and members of the martyrs' families, who directly and indirectly contributed to our victory. The nation recalls their contributions with utmost respect.

Independence is the greatest achievement of the Bengali nation. It enabled us to achieve a sovereign country, independent nationhood, a sacred constitution, a map and a red-green flag. Behind the achievement, there was a prolonged history of deprivation, sanguinary struggle and supreme sacrifice of our people. The seeds of Independence that were sown in the Language Movement in 1952 subsequently came into being on 26 March in 1971 through the proclamation of Independence by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, overcoming various ups and downs and staging long movement and agitation. The final victory was achieved on 16 December in 1971 through a nine-month long armed war of liberation against Pakistani invading forces under Bangabandhu's leadership and guidance.

The aims of our independence were to attain political sovereignty as well as people's economic emancipation. Returning to the newly independent country after being freed from Pakistan's prison, the Father of the Nation started his journey for achieving economic self-sufficiency by rebuilding economy and infrastructure of the war-torn country, keeping the aims of Independence in mind. He called for an agricultural revolution and launched a movement against corruption, black marketeers, profiteers and looters. But the progress of democracy and development came to a halt after the brutal assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his near and dear ones being committed by a group of anti-liberation forces on August 15, 1975. Subsequently, the autocratic and undemocratic government was emerged.

Overcoming various ups and downs, now a democratic government has been established in the country. With the spirit and values of our Liberation War and Independence, the Government under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has taken 'Vision 2021', 'Vision 2041' and hundred-year long 'Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100' to materialise the unfinished tasks of Bangabandhu. The objectives of these plans are to attain the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and to turn Bangladesh into a developed and prosperous country by 2041 respectively. Despite various adversities, sustained economic growth in recent years is continuing due to undertaking manifold public welfare-oriented programmes by the government. Today, Bangladesh is the 41st largest economy in the world. The country will become the 25th largest economy in the world by 2035, according to a UK research organization 'Center for Economic and Business Research'.

The country is advancing in every socio-economic index, including health, education, women's empowerment, etc. Bangladesh, in the meantime, has been elevated to a developing country from a least developed country. The construction work of the Padma Bridge, which is being constructed by our own resources, is nearing completion. Besides, some mega projects like Metro Rail, Payra Sea Port, Karnaphuli Multipurpose Tunnel, Elevated Expressway, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant are being implemented. Bangladesh is now a proud member of the elite satellite club through launching the Bangabandhu Satellite-1 into space. All-out cooperation as well as a positive change of outlook of our people is imperative to take this ongoing development trend forward.

Our foreign policy is being exercised in accordance with the principle of 'Friendship to all, malice towards none' as enunciated by the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh believes in world peace and harmony. Bangladesh has set a unique example of humanity in international arena by providing shelter to millions of forcibly displaced and tortured Rohingyas fled from Myanmar. We believe in a peaceful solution of the crisis. Our expatriate Bangladeshis are making a significant contribution to the national economy by sending their hard-earned remittances to the country. The nation acknowledges their contribution with gratitude.

The COVID pandemic has put human civilization to the brink of one of the worst disasters in history. The COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily hampered our development and progress, but could not halt it. Corona infection is now under control in Bangladesh due to timely and far-sighted steps taken by the government and the death rate is close to zero. The nationwide COVID vaccination program is progressing in full swing. Bangladesh is successfully coping with the Corona situation, due to the 31-point directives and the timely decision given by Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and tireless efforts of all concerned to deal with this unexpected situation. To win the war against Corona virus, I call upon the people to follow health guidelines properly.

We shall have to give institutional shape to democracy in order to deliver the benefits of Independence to people's doorstep, which we attained through the sacrifice of millions of martyrs. The political parties will have to nurture the culture of mutual respect and of tolerance of others' opinion. Let us contribute more from our respective positions in implementing the spirit and values of war of liberation and take the nation towards the path of development and prosperity. Let our country turn into 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal) as dreamt of by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It is my expectation on the great Victory Day.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid
Md. Abdul Hamid

Victory's Dream Ladder
Panna Kaiser

How fifty years have passed since victory! Swayed by delight and pride, the Bengali nation has been harboring innumerable memories that have been undergoing endless ruptures. After nine months, valiant Bangalees had freed their country of its enemies, liberating it and amazing the whole world by doing so. Three million Bengalis sacrificed their lives and innumerable mothers and sisters had been violated in the process. In these memories of freedom are entangled grief, suffering, joy and pain are entangled in these memories. The superhero with whose name the history of our independence is threaded is the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. If he had not been born, Bangladesh would not have achieved independence. "Since we have shed blood already, we will shed more of it!" Amazing, valiant, uncompromising, dedicated to truth and to the beautiful, a visionary—a true champion—it is without him that the country has been celebrating Victory Day year after year. But internally there have been hemorrhages. Those traitors who murdered him and his family members in the historic Rd. 32 house have committed sins that cannot be erased even if they are borne perpetually. Bangabandhu lives, nevertheless, in his Bangladesh and in the heart of Bangalees. He is the light in the eyes of the golden people of golden Bengal. On this day they remember him respectfully and renew their vows to build the nation up with his ideals. I also remember on the occasion Sheikh Fazlulnassir, Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, Sultana, Rosy and the ten-year-old boy Sheikh Russel.

Bangladesh's good fortune is that Bangabandhu's two daughters, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, had survived because they were abroad then. The way the assassins had polluted the ideals of the war of independence after having assumed power in 1975! On her return to the country in 1981, Sheikh Hasina was able to use her willpower, sagacity, and firm resolve; her wisdom was of the kind that would have been able to conquer even unconquerable Himalayan peaks. I recall at this time as well Sheikh Rehana and the manner in which she helped her older sister Sheikh Hasina constantly and encouraged her in her work.

All of a sudden, through an open window raindrops dripped and a shadow caressed me—I felt a hand's soft touch. Through the shadow's imprint Raibazar's killing marshland appear—dimly at first. On 16 December, 1971 I was looking desperately for my beloved in the blood-stained swamp that was Rayerbazar's killing field. I turned over the many dead bodies strewn there but could not locate him. I got up from the swamp and returned home with my brother-in-law Zakaria. This is how it was for me for a long time; that hands' caress that come with that shadow has given me the strength to go on. The cruel sport devised by the forces that conspired against our independence had made me swear on the blood-soaked soil of Rayerbazar that day, "I will be always accompanying you—inspire me so that I have the courage to always do so". That Victory Day I had spat at the assassins publicly and come away. I never again returned to those killing fields. But let the procession of bodies be in my memory forever. I live in my memories. They give me the strength to move on. The moment of delight that came with victory—memories—so many memories—at times still moisten my eyes.

Shahidullah Kaiser had so many dreams. He would reform Raibazar completely. On the night of December 3, Dhaka was quaking repeatedly because of mortars and machine gun fire and bombs were exploding all the time. When I asked him whether I would go downstairs with our two children, he said that we wouldn't be going anywhere. "Look—look at Sangbad's headlines!" In the morning of December 3, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury and Ahmedul Kabir had visited us. I could see that they had some urgent matters to discuss. When I served them three cups of tea, Uncle (Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury) said, "Take care!" My eyes moistened. Uncle laid his hand on my forehead to give me courage and said, "The time has come for decisive change." I could not figure out what he had in mind, but I pretended did. I said to him, "Uncle—you three keep talking and excuse me for now." As I returned to the room from the verandah, I kept remembering how from 27 March we had to take shelter in the houses of so many people we didn't even know. Every time we shifted from one house to another, Shahidullah would return



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home and place his hand on my forehead and say to me, "You will be able to see one independence day; I too!" When the children have gone to sleep, look at Sangbad's headlines—let me go for now." He left in a hurry and went to his study table. He spent a very busy day afterwards. On quite a few occasions I would see people I didn't know at all meet him; I couldn't figure out what was being said as they talked in the verandah. At midnight on December 3, the loud sound of mortar and machine gun fire could be heard. He took me to the rooftop. I saw bomber planes and bombs with my own eyes.

In the only two years and ten months that I had spent with him after coming from a village I was able to see so many things! I would hold on to his hand tightly and say to myself, "If our country attains independence, while victory day is being celebrated I will hold your hands and work with you to build up the country." But that was not going to be!

On 12 December, Nurul Islam (President of the Democratic Party) came to visit us. He stayed with us for five minutes or so. After he had left, I came and stood with my husband. He held my hand and said, "I will have to leave the house tomorrow." Why?" I said to him. He held me close and said, "The country is going to be independent now, but the Razakars will strike one last time for sure."

After having taken refuge in all sort of places, we had returned to our own house in November. But why did we return then? He said to me calmly, "Has all seven and half crore Bengalis been able to take refuge in India?" In reply to my question he said that he was among those who had taken on the huge responsibility of working for the freedom fighters. His own assigned work was to collect medicine, clothes and food and then transport them across the border. I remember that the supplies we had collected from Aunt Sofia's house we would store on the other side of the wall. But you had no idea about who our neighbor was. I can say now that the house was the Russian Cultural Center. Those who had left for India, had handed over their ration cards to Aunt Sofia before leaving. There was no lack of money to purchase the rationed items. He said to me, "Listen—tomorrow—the 14th of December—when curfew is lifted, we will leave. We'll have to go by tomorrow."

14 December—we had been waiting since morning. Time passed but there was no announcement telling us that the curfew had been lifted. Morning, afternoon and evening passed. When the sun was setting and I was crossing the verandah to go downstairs I saw all of a sudden a little distance from our house four to five boys talking. I moved away and placed myself behind the mango tree in front of our house. After I had stood there for a while I saw two of the boys pointing fingers at the direction of our house and saying something. I rushed to my room. He was listening to the news on BBC radio. In some agitation, he made me sit beside him. I couldn't tell him what I had seen even though I tried to do so. As I stood to get up after a while, he took my hand, made me sit down again next to him and said, "What is that you want to say? I haven't been able to listen to the news yet." When I then told him what I had seen he laughed and said, "Those boys must be of this neighborhood. Don't worry, these pests aren't going to find escape routes anymore to save their skins." I thought, "Perhaps he is right!" I then went into the bedroom.

I prepared some milk for Shomi. I put the milk bottle on the table and stood up for the Maghrib [early evening] prayer. I thought since Shomi was sleeping I would take this opportunity to pray. Amazingly, as I started my prayer I felt like crying. I cried and cried till I finished praying. My eyes were all wet then. As I wrapped up my prayers by lifting my hands to God, I sought His blessings for Shahidullah Kaiser. I prayed as well for our little boy Amitav Kaiser and our baby daughter Shomi. After I had finished my prayer, I took the bottle of milk I had prepared for Shomi and said to her, "Tuntuni dearest let's go to Dad." Seeing the bottle of milk in my hand, the little dear began to giggle. Shahidullah used to call her "Tuntuni" and Amitav "Bhombal Das" lovingly. I took Shomi in my lap and made her sit in the living room and saw that he had put Amitav to bed and was writing something or the other. I then sat down on the sofa downstairs. The 14th day of the month was almost over. And yet curfew had not been lifted and we had not been able to leave the flat. He looked pale but said, "The country is about to become independent." But even before he was able to finish the sentence, my brother-in-law Mia came and said to him, "Elder brother, some people are knocking at the door from outside. Should I open it for them?" Shahidullah said, "Yes, do" and stood up. He said to me, "Give me the keys." I said to him, "What will you do with them?" He said, "Look, the freedom fighters have come. They might need some money. I gestured at the knot in my sari's border to show where the money could be kept. He went in quickly to the bedroom. I heard the almirah door being opened. He returned to the living room quickly and tying the key ring to my sari's border said to me, "What is the matter? Why aren't they coming?" But then four men with black-masked faces showed up. "Who is Shahidullah Kaiser?" one of them asked. He himself said, "I am." The four masked men surrounded him immediately and yanking his hand, pulled him away towards the verandah. As they did so, I left Shomi and ran to them and tried to pull him away by grabbing his other hand. The milk bottle fell from the little baby's hands. From that day onwards till now Shomi stopped having milk. I came to the verandah and put on the light, shouting, "Where is everybody?" But there was no sound at all and no one said anything. Those Razakar assassins had tied everyone up downstairs. They dragged him to the stairway. As I pulled open the mask from one of the faces of those who were tied with my hand, my sister-in-law came and took out his whole mask and started shrieking. But the two of us were no match for the four of them. My hand was forcibly unclasped....

You looked at me and said, "Take care! I will come back soon." I had so much to say to him, but he would not be able to listen and I was not able to tell him what I had to say. I lost my senses. I have no idea how the 14th and the 15th went. From the 15th night, the whole country reverberated with cries of "Joi Bangla"—"Victory to Bengal". On 16 December, Zakaria came and said to me, "Uncle Zahur Hossein has talked to several police station about him. Come Bhabhi"



Message

Today is the 16 December, our great Victory Day. Bangladesh has completed 50 years of her victory. This is a glorious day of the Bangalee nation. Responding to the clarion call of the Greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Bangalee nation achieved ultimate victory on this day in 1971 after 23 years of intense political struggles and 9 months of blood-shedding War of Liberation.

I extend my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to the countrymen on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of our great victory. I recall with deep gratitude Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I pay my tributes to four national leaders, three million martyrs, two hundred thousand dishonoured women of the War of Liberation and the greatest sons of the soil—the Freedom Fighters whose supreme sacrifices made independent-sovereign Bangladesh. I recall with gratitude those foreign states and friends who had extended their support during our Liberation War.

On the occasion of the 'Mujib Year' marking the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation and Golden Jubilee of our victory, colorful programs have been chalked out. In the wake of Coronavirus pandemic, the programs are being celebrated following the health protocols avoiding public gathering.

Under the undaunted leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, the Bangalee nation got prepared for independence through Language Movement of 1948-52, Education Movement of 1962, Six-point Demand of 1966, and Eleven-point Movement and Mass Uprising of 1969. The Awami League secured an absolute majority in whole Pakistan in the general elections of 1970. However, Pakistanis did not allow the Bangalee nation to assume power. The Father of the Nation realized that the oppressor, persecution and deprivation meted out to the Bangalee nation would not be ended without achieving independence. Accordingly, on the historic 7 March of 1971, he in front of a million of people at the then Race Course Maidan firmly pronounced, "The struggle this time is a struggle for our emancipation, our liberation. This time is a struggle for independence. At the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, country-wide non-cooperation movement began. Preparation for waging armed struggle also continued. On the fateful night of 25 March of 1971, the Pakistani occupation forces launched a brutal onslaught and committed genocide on the innocent and unarmed Bangalees. At the early hours of 26 March, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib declared independence of Bangladesh. Formal War of Independence started. The first government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the President, Syed Nazrul Islam as the Vice-President and Tajuddin Ahmad as the Prime Minister was sworn-in on 17 April at the historic Mujibnagar and led the Liberation War. The valiant freedom fighters earned ultimate victory on 16 December by defeating Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators—Razakar, Al-Badr and Al-Sham. We have gotten our red-green flag.

In just three and a half years of his government, the Father of the Nation rebuilt the war-ravaged country. Destroyed roads, bridges, culverts, railways, ports were rebuilt to revive the economy. In just 10 months, our constitution was drafted on the basis of the spirit of Liberation War under his direction. In 1975, the GDP growth rate exceeded 9%. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib turned war-ravaged Bangladesh into a 'least developed country'.

While Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was advancing to build an exploitation-deprivation-free noncommunal 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. 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 21 years. After assuming the office, we took initiatives to establish Bangladesh as a dignified state 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 Murder Case.

Forming governments for the three consecutive terms since 2009, Bangladesh Awami League has relentlessly been working for the last 13 years to improve the living standard of the people. We are implementing the unfinished works of the Father of the Nation. Today, Bangladesh is self-reliant in food production. We are now focusing on ensuring nutrition for the people. 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 four national leaders has been accomplished. The trial of war criminals continues and the verdicts are being executed.

We have formulated the Second Perspective Plan for 2021-2041 and are executing the 8th Five-Year Plan. We have started 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 rural level. The urban facilities are being delivered to every village. All landless-homeless people are being provided houses. No one of Bangladesh will be left homeless. To keep the economy going, offsetting the impacts of Coronavirus, we have so far announced 28 stimulus packages worth Tk 1,31,641 crore. A total of 99.75% people has been brought under electricity coverage. Per capita income increased to 2,554 US\$ now from 543 US\$ in 2005-06. We have made incredible progress in every sector of the country. Bangladesh is now a 'Role Model' in every field of socio-economic development including agriculture, education, health, communication, information technology, industry, trade and commerce. Bangladesh has received the final approval of the United Nations to graduate from a least developed country to a dignified 'developing nation'.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib elevated Bangladesh to a least developed country, and we took the motherland to the row of a 'developing state' on the auspicious occasion of 'Mujib Year' and the Golden Jubilee of our victory. Everything we have achieved in the last 50 years since our Independence has been attained by the Father of the Nation and the Awami League. I firmly believe that if this trend of development continues, Bangladesh will be established as a hunger-poverty-free and developed-prosperous country by 2041 as dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib, InshaAllah.

The establishment of the nation-state 'Bangladesh' through the victory of the War of Liberation on 16 December 1971 was the greatest achievement of the Bangalee nation. To make this achievement meaningful, we have to know and let people know about the Greatest Hero of Independence Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib and the War of Liberation. We will convey the spirit of the great Liberation War from generation to generation—let this be our pledge on this auspicious occasion of the Golden Jubilee of our victory.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Sheikh Hasina
Sheikh Hasina

[sister-in-law]. We took a rickshaw, first to Kotwali police station and then to the Motijheel one and then went to a few other police stations. But we could not get any news of him. Later, we went to the Rayer Bazar swamp. On our way, we saw victory celebrations going on everywhere. Mothers, sisters, old men and women and young were congratulating the freedom fighters by waving their hands at them.

The two of us had such dreams! The day the country would be freed of the enemy would be the day we would welcome the day from the liberated soil of a free country. But how cruel fate had turned out to be for us! Things did not turn out that way we had dreamt of for us. The 16th of December went with us searching for a long time for our beloved one in the blood-stained, wet swampland of Rayer Bazar's killing field. Frustrated, in the end we returned home. I thought—the time has now come to walk on the road to the future struggling with hardship. I had not been able to see victory the way we had wanted to.

In Fate's feet weak souls that we are Let us not be begging and pleading

There is nothing to fear For you are there And I am with you

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