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“Who Killed Mujib?” A Narrative with a Difference

MOFIDUL HOQUE

“Who Killed Mujib?” is a recurring question that has haunted the nation since the unfolding of the tragic events in mid-August 1975. The brutal killing of the Founding Father of the Nation, along with his wife and children, may seem absurd to many members of the new generation, but more absurdity followed the tragedy itself. The killers were given protection under the Indemnity Ordinance proclaimed by the self-declared President Khondokar Mustaque Ahmed and later endorsed by an act of the Parliament led by General Ziaur Rahman. The killers not only physically eliminated Sheikh Mujib but also tried to erase his name from the pages of history. Falsehood won this first battle, but truth had to wage a long war to prevail. The killers were finally brought to justice, and the judgment was delivered on 19 November 2009. Even then, not all the accused could be produced in court as a few were absconding, finding safe haven in Pakistan, the USA, and Canada. With the case deposited in the court of law, one can say that the killers were identified, and justice was delivered. However, the question of who killed Mujib lingers on. It is well understood that the assassination of a head of state or government is always a well-orchestrated, well-designed plot where those who operate at the scene can be easily identified, but their powerful masters remain outside the purview of the public and the legal system.

A. L. Khatib's book ‘Who Killed Mujib?’ published in Delhi in 1981 was the first major work written with a combination of academic research and journalistic skill that calls for serious study. First of all, we have to address the question of who this A. L. Khatib is. Not many people know him these days, but he was a well-known and respected figure among the journalist community in Dhaka in the 1950s and 60s. He was an outsider who fell in love with East Bengal and its people. Many stories circulated around this exceptional person, whose full name was Abdul Latif Khatib. He hailed from Maharashtra, India, but his father went to the sea and settled in Colombo, Sri Lanka. A. L. Khatib started his journalistic career in Ceylon and then, via Karachi, came to Dhaka in the middle of the 1950s, working at the Observer and Morning News. He was a bachelor who stayed in the old press club building in a room with a few essentials but lots of books and periodicals. He was a close friend of Sanjeeb Dutta, son of the illustrious politician Shaheed Dhirendranath Dutta, and the poet-journalist Sayeed Atiqullah. Eminent Bengali poet Subhas Mukhopadhyaya knew him well and wrote: ‘It never occurred to me to ask questions like where does Khatib hail from, who are the other members of his family, did he ever marry, is he a Hindu or Muslim, Christian or Buddhist. When he came to Delhi as the correspondent of the Bangladesh Observer, I became

close to him again.’

A. L. was a keen observer of the political and social development of East Bengal since the mid-1950s, when the nation embarked on a great journey to confront the divisive communal philosophy of the Pakistani state and establish the right of the Bengali people to be masters of their land. He was a voracious reader with a wide interest and a sharp memory. In many ways, he reminds me of A.G. Noorani, Abdul Gaffar, with his AG, a confirmed bachelor who lives in his Mumbai apartment among piles of books and writes a fortnightly column in ‘Frontline’ full of historical facts and knowledge. Similarly, the book by A. L. has taken a deeper look at the tragic event and analyzed it from local and global perspectives. Of course, he portrayed the ‘Killer Majors’ and their cohorts, but he analyzed the event not simply as a conspiracy of a few but as a Joint Criminal Enterprise or JCE, a term that is very much in circulation now, especially in the International Criminal Court and similar other domestic tribunals established to try the perpetrators of genocidal crimes. Unfortunately, national criminal courts remain focused on individual criminality and, at most, address the question of complicity in the crime, but the larger plot remains outside their focus. That may be okay with the national legal system but is inadequate to answer the question ‘Who Killed Mujib?’

SEE PAGE 52

১৫ | জাতীয়
আগস্ট | শোক
দিবস



জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান
ও তাঁর পরিবারের সকল শহীদদের প্রতি

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We walk your dreams and that towards our journey continues

“On a sun drenched morning you stood tall and glorious at Dhanmandi Road 32. Your light touch beckoned an enlightened future. My walking around and the love of elders used to be the essence of Road 32 then.

On 15th August 1975, they snatched Bangabandhu away from us which pushed us into emptiness, helplessness and an unknown world. But still, finding Bangabandhu in our memory always brings back that touch of life.

Today, at this memorable moment of country's ongoing development, you remain our inspiration as ever - gratitude & respect.”

(Reminiscence) – Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director

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It is the duty of the nation now to try to address this pertinent question that is haunting the minds of millions. Research-based documented historical analysis is essential to gain a better understanding of the tragic killing of Bangabandhu.



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering the historic 7th March speech.

FROM PAGE S1

It is the duty of the nation now to try to address this pertinent question that is haunting the minds of millions. Research-based documented historical analysis is essential to gain a better understanding of the tragic killing of Bangabandhu. A. L. was a pioneer in this regard, a lone crusader who spent his life's wealth and experience to answer the question. On the one hand, he analyzed the global scenario, the historic emergence of Bangladesh, and the massive problems the devastated land faced in rebuilding the infrastructure as well as feeding the people. Thus, he contextualized the role and contribution of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the struggle of the nation and debunked many propagandist myths. He meticulously re-enacted the events of 15 August, the roles of the

individual killers, while also examining their connections with a few close associates of Sheikh Mujib and tracing the communication they had with their higher-ups and foreign diplomats.

A. L. Khatib's portrayal of the 'Killer Majors' offers insights and a deep psychological understanding. He wrote: 'The 'I' is very pronounced in his (Farook's) utterances. 'I engineered the coup ---' 'I ordered Mujib's killing ---'. 'I ordered Mujib's death'. Rashid is less enthusiastic in his utterances, but he too speaks only of himself. Neither Farook nor Rashid uses 'We,' though the two of them had plotted the killing of Mujib. Dalim proudly declared his name when he announced that the Mujib government had been toppled. Rashid thinks poorly of Huda, who failed to shoot Mujib. Huda ridicules Farook's claim that he gave orders

while sitting on a tank.'

Such an analysis of the psyche of mass murderers reminds us of the analysis of the mind of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi war criminal, conducted by the social thinker Hannah Arendt in her famous book 'Eichmann in Jerusalem.' She observed the trial in Jerusalem and wrote about the 'banality of evil' and the 'interdependence between thoughtlessness and evil.' Unfortunately, no social psychologist was present in our court when the killers of Mujib were put on trial, and there has been no political, social, or psychological analysis conducted about the extreme brutality of the killing of Sheikh Mujib and his family, followed by the murder of four national leaders inside the jail.

A. L. Khatib's portrayal of Khondoker Mustaque Ahmed showed his deep understanding of the politics

of the Awami League and secular Bengali nationalism. He wrote: 'By the end of 1954, most members of the Awami Muslim League thought 'Muslim' in the party's name to be a hindrance and wanted it to be removed. But to Mustaque, the party was the 'Muslim League' with 'Awami' added to it. When more than 500 counselors voted at the Awami Muslim League council meeting in 1955 to drop 'Muslim' from the party's name, Abdus Salam Khan and Mustaque walked out of the meeting.' A. L. depicted in detail the whereabouts of Khondoker Mustaque Ahmed after the genocidal attack launched by the Pakistan Army. It took 13 days for Mustaque to decide to cross the border and join his colleagues in India. Mustaque was a reluctant participant in Muktijuddha, and A. L. analyzed

the photo of the leaders of the newly formed government at Mujibnagar, where Khondoker Mustaque Ahmed was standing not in line but a step behind with less enthusiasm.

Mustaque was engaged in hatching conspiracy with American contacts in Calcutta to derail the liberation war, which also received high acclaim from Henry Kissinger, the National Security Advisor of the US President, a sinister character in toppling governments in many countries around the world. The Mustaque-Mahbubul Alam Chashi duo was the 'Calcutta-based Bangladesh leadership' for Henry Kissinger. About Kissinger, A. L. Khatib further wrote that the leaders whom Kissinger couldn't tolerate were Allende of Chile, Thieu of South Vietnam, and Mujib of Bangladesh. All of them embraced the same fate as expected by Henry Kissinger.

The main part of the book ended in 1977, and the manuscript went through the publishing process to be launched in 1981. Before the publication, A. L. Khatib added an epilogue describing Sheikh Hasina's return to Bangladesh in 1981. To Khatib, the reception at the airport was reminiscent of Mujib's triumphant return to Dhaka on 10 January 1972. His final words: 'Hasina, who had taken ill in Dhaka, was running a high temperature by the time she reached Tungipara on the afternoon of 19 May. She fainted as she was offering 'fateha' at her father's grave.'

A. L. Khatib's narrative ended abruptly, as his life came to an end in 1984 under dubious circumstances. The book became an instant bestseller, but surprisingly, publisher Narendra Kumar refrained from issuing any new print runs. The book just vanished from the racks of the bookshops. Strangely enough, the Bangladesh government of the time commissioned Anthony Mascarenhas to write and publish another book 'A Legacy of Blood' on the same theme to counter the book by A. L. Khatib.

But history moves on. Ultimately, truth has prevailed against falsehood, but the war is not over. We need a lot of work to be done in the light of A. L. Khatib's book to find a clear picture of 'Who Killed Mujib?'

Mofidul Hoque is a Trustee of the Liberation War Museum.

Remembering Sheikh Mujib- A Young and Dynamic Minister



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with Tajuddin Ahmad and women leaders of Awami League listening to the 1970's election results.

FROM PAGE S3

After Sheikh Mujib made a beginning with this successful experiment in East Pakistan, West Pakistan followed suit and created the West Pakistan Small Industries Corporation.

Today, perhaps not many people are aware of Sheikh Mujib's contribution to the development of film industry in East Pakistan.

In September 1957, I left for Harvard University for higher studies and developed close friendship with Prof. Munier Chowdhury who was studying linguistics at the same university. He lived in a small flat with his wife Lily Chowdhury and son Bhason. Prof. Chowdhury informed me that Sheikh Mujib, who had, by this time left the Government and took over as the Secretary General of the Awami League party was coming to Boston for medical treatment. We both went to the Boston Logan Airport and received Sheikh Mujib

who had come there for a major stomach surgery at the Boston General Hospital.

Sheikh Mujib was all alone in a foreign country for undergoing a major surgery and therefore we decided that, between me and Prof. Chowdhury, we should take time, in between studies, to be by his hospital bed-side as much as possible. After about a week, Sheikh Mujib was released from the hospital and moved into Munier Chowdhury's one bed-room apartment and occupied a corner of the 10 ft. by 12 ft. living room. He could not afford the cost of recuperating in a hotel. It was during this period that I came very close to him and many a time he and Munier Chowdhury would reminisce about their life in the Dhaka Central Jail. Lily Chowdhury was an excellent hostess.

The Harvard Group, with Dean Mason, David Bell, Gustav Papanec etc. were keen to meet Sheikh Mujib and it fell on me to arrange the

meeting. Sheikh Mujib was greatly impressed by the interest and in-depth knowledge that this group had about Pakistan's politics and economy. It was this Harvard Group that came out openly to condemn the genocide perpetrated by the Pakistani Army after the crackdown in 1971.

It was evident that Sheikh Mujib was on a tight budget but it did not deter him to show an expensive gift on Munier Chowdhury's son at the time he left Harvard. Even with a limited pocket, Mujib carried with him a large heart.

The love and affection that developed between me and Sheikh Mujib during those Harvard days came to an end when the cruel hands of destiny abruptly removed the great man from our midst.

M Matiul Islam is a former Finance Secretary.

This article was first published in The Daily Star on March 17, 1998.



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Remembering Sheikh Mujib- A Young and Dynamic Minister

An autonomous type corporate body for the development of small-scale industry was a novel idea in those days. After Sheikh Mujib made a beginning with this successful experiment in East Pakistan, West Pakistan followed suit and created the West Pakistan Small Industries Corporation.

M.MATIUL ISLAM

With the fall of United Front Government of Abu Hossain Sarkar in 1956, Ataur Rahman Khan formed the Awami League Government in East Pakistan and Sheikh Mujib, Captain Monsur Ali, Manoranjan Dhar and few other prominent Awami League leaders joined the Cabinet of Ataur Rahman Khan. Sheikh Mujib was given the portfolio of Commerce, Labour and Industries, popularly known as the Department of C.L. & I which also looked after power and electricity, there being no separate department for power or electricity in the then East Pakistan Government.

I was then working as Under Secretary, Department of Finance, having joined there a year earlier. I had known Sheikh Mujib as a fire-brand politician who spent years in jail for his views as an opposition activist, but had no personal acquaintance with him.

During that period, Dhaka Electric Supply Company was in private hands and was managed by Messrs Octavious Steel, a British Company with their main office in Chittagong and the commercial office of Dhaka Electric Supply located on Abdul Gani Road adjacent to the East Pakistan Secretariat. I got the first taste of Sheikh Mujib's bold decision-making style when one day, while traveling to the Secretariat in a rickshaw, I noticed a contingent of armed constables surrounding the commercial office of Dhaka Electric Supply and on reaching office learnt that Sheikh Mujib, in one sweep, has taken over management of the Dhaka Electric Supply from Messrs Octavious Steel on allegations of grave mismanagement and that I have been



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a Cabinet meeting with the Governor of East Pakistan Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq and the Chief Minister Ataur Rahman Khan (June 7, 1957)

entrusted with the responsibility of making detailed investigation into the charges of mismanagement and corruption. It dawned on me that it was not for nothing that Sheikh Mujib had earned the reputation as a fire-brand politician who clearly knew his priorities. I was more than convinced that more such surprises are in the

offing.

A few days after this episode, I was promoted as Additional Deputy Commissioner and was posted to Rangpur where I spent only six months and again was posted back to the Secretariat as Financial Adviser (Development) and Deputy Secretary, Department of Finance, a key position

created by the Government to bring sanctioning of all development expenditure under one officer in the Dept. of Finance. In this capacity, I was also responsible to handle all loan negotiations with the Government of Pakistan including release of developmental funds from the center to the provincial government.

Loan negotiation with the Ministry of Finance, Government of Pakistan, was an uphill task and obtaining release of funds was a nightmare. It was a frustrating experience for a young officer like me to take the long journey to Karachi almost every month and return most of the time empty handed.

One morning, as I was looking into urgent message from the Government of Pakistan, I got the surprise of my life with the contents of a sanctioning letter which said that the Ministry of Finance was pleased to sanction Rs. 1 crore for a Film Development Corporation and another Rs. 1 crore for creating of corporation for the development of small-scale industry in East Pakistan.

It was quite clear that some unseen hands had worked behind the scene to obtain overnight sanction and simultaneous release of funds for two corporate bodies about which neither the Planning Department nor the Dept. of Finance were aware of. To me it was a miracle and I knew that none other than Sheikh Mujib was capable of performing such miracles.

The film industry in East Pakistan during that period was non-existent. One or two bold producers have tried in vain with Bengali production but with little or no success. Sheikh Mujib realized that for production of good Bengali films, the industry needed government patronage and support, needed production facilities and well-equipped studios etc. without which the field would remain wide open for Urdu films from West Pakistan.

An autonomous type corporate body for the development of small-scale industry was a novel idea in those days.

SEE PAGE S2

শুধু শোকে নও, আছো শক্তিতে
প্রেরণায়-জাগরণে-মুক্তিতে

১৫ আগস্ট জাতীয় শোক দিবসে জাতির জনক বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান
ও তাঁর পরিবারের সকল শহীদের প্রতি বিকাশ-এর গভীর শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

বিকাশ

১৫ আগস্ট
জাতীয়
শোক দিবস

এখনও
হৃদয়ে রক্তের দাগ
শুকায়ে নাই

সর্বকালের সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ বাঙালি,
জাতির পিতা
বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান
ও তার পরিবারের সকল শহীদের প্রতি
আমাদের বিনম্র শ্রদ্ধা।

সিটিজেন্স ব্যাংক
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As part of their election campaign, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were traveling in Rajshahi by boat (1954).

WORDS OF BANGABANDHU A Letter Collection

“Upholding pride without grieving is your duty”

East Pakistan Awami Muslim League
9, Nawabpur Road, Dacca
Dated: 06.07.52

Dear Mother,
Accept my heartfelt greetings. You may not know me, yet today I am compelled to write. Your son, Khalek Nawaaz, is currently in jail. There is no need to grieve over this. I too have spent a long two and a half years in prison. It is to alleviate the sorrow and adversity of the country and its people that he is in jail today. Upholding pride without grieving is your duty. If there is ever a need for anything, please do not forget to inform me. I am like your son. Khalek Nawaaz is doing well. He is taking his exams from jail. He is with Maulana Bhashani Sahib.

Your affectionate
(s/d) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

[Copy of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's letter dated 06-07-1952 from the East Pakistan Awami League office to the mother of student leader Khalek Nawaz at the address of Achargaon, P. Nandail, Mymensingh. Source: Government of East Bangal, Home Poll, F/N, 606-48pf, Part-4. Translated by Sarah Bintay Shakhawat]

“We are fighting against a thousand odds”

150, Mughaltully, Dacca
21/8/49

Janab,
Hope you have received my letter sent along with Manik Bhai letter. We are all anxiously awaiting for reply to the points raised therein on our behalf. You certainly realise the attitude if the present regime which is mean. All sorts of oppression has been let loose. Promulgation of Sec. 144, arrest and harassment of our workers have become every day affairs. In spite of all these our organisational work is proceeding unexpectedly fast. But for an 'Organ' all our activities cannot be published. The other day we organized a public meeting at the Armanitola Maidan on the occasion of the Independence Day celebration but the Ministerial party wanted and in fact employed all vile tactics to break our meeting but all their attempts failed and the meeting was a tremendous success and there was a gathering of nearly fifty thousand. But for want of publicity we are fighting against thousand odds and you also know where other difficulties be. Our workers in mufassil are harassed like anything. I am leaving for Barisal and Gopalganj tonight, our workers have been assaulted and arrested in those places.

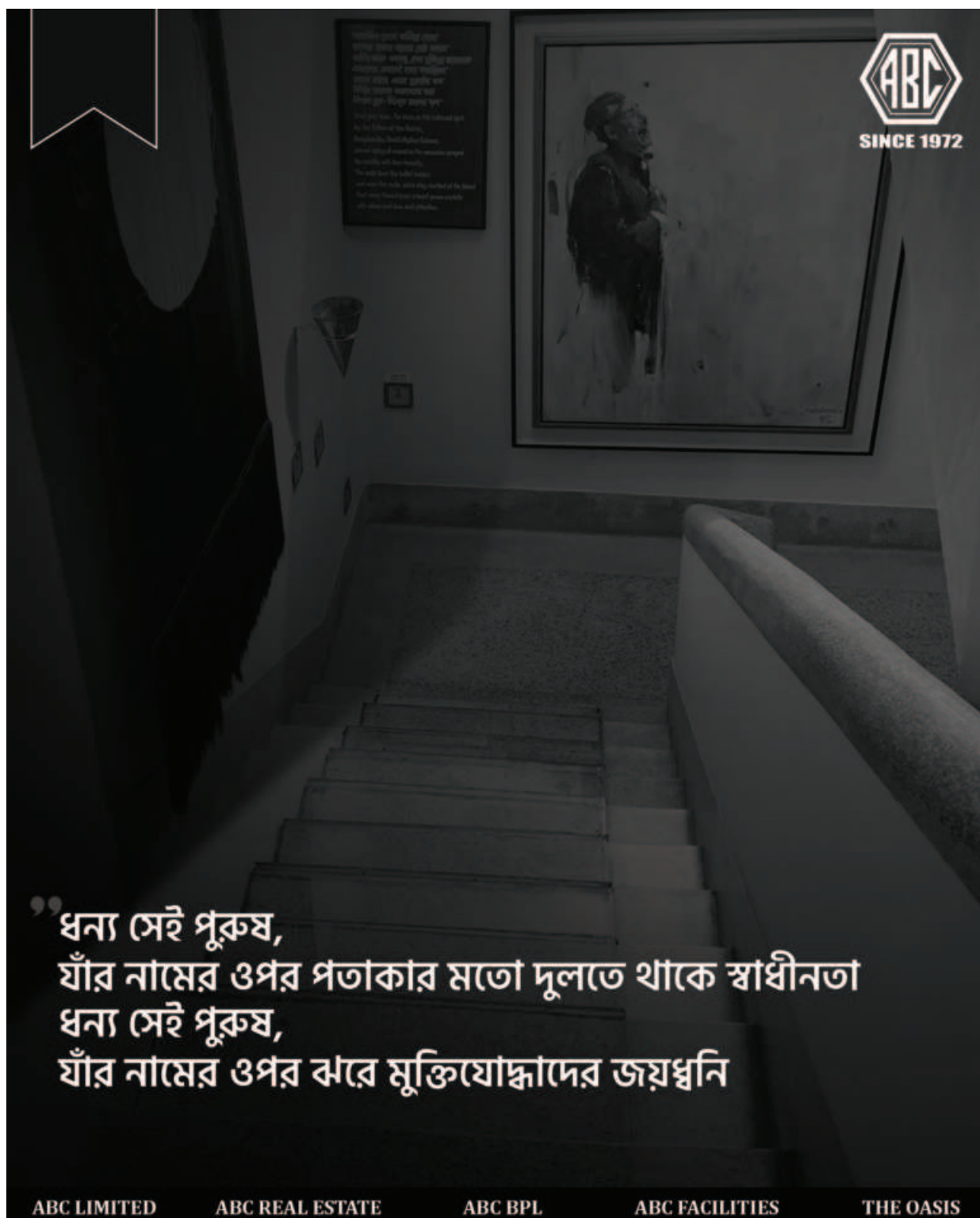
The conference of the East Pakistan Muslim Students' League have been fixed on the 16th and 17th Sept. 1949 would you kindly see that Mian Manzoral Alam, Mr. Abdus Sattar Khan, Niyajmi and Mr. Gholam Nabi of West Punjab are available to address the same? On hearing from you we shall issue invitation cards to those gentlemen.

When are you coming to Dacca? We are all anxious to have you in our midst for various talks.

Manik Bhai is indisposed. Yet we have requested him to take up charge of the central office of the Awami Muslim League.

With best regards,
Yours affectionately,
S/- Mujibur Rahman

[A letter written by Bangabandhu dated 21-08-1949 to Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy in English. The letter was intercepted on 25-08-1949 by the Detective Police, Dhaka, and a copy was kept on record. Source: "Bangabandhu'r Oprokashito Chithipotro" (Bangabandhu's Unpublished Letters) by Dr. Sunil Kanti De.]



ধন্য সেই পুরুষ,
যাঁর নামের ওপর পতাকার মতো দুলতে থাকে স্বাধীনতা
ধন্য সেই পুরুষ,
যাঁর নামের ওপর ঝরে মুক্তিযোদ্ধাদের জয়ধ্বনি

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YOU ARE ETERNAL,
BANGABANDHU

Our utmost respect to Bangabandhu
Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and all the
martyrs of 15th August.

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Sheikh Mujib- The Architect of Bangladesh's Foreign Relations



▲ US President Gerald Ford hosted Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the White House on October 1, 1974.

Sheikh Mujib displayed a remarkable statesmanship by underlining the importance of developing regional cooperation. Regional cooperation is a "by word" now but in the war-ravaged situation of those days, it must have called for courage and foresight on his part

FARUQ CHOUDHURY

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia has now familiarized the world with the emergence of independent ethnic states chipped out of the mother country. But the birth of Bangladesh in the early seventies as an independent and sovereign state breaking away from Pakistan was not readily appreciated internationally although as our independence struggle progressed sympathy for our cause snowballed. One may be tempted to make the point that Pakistan itself was a breakaway country, when in 1947, it was created as a result of tripartite negotiations with the Congress, the Muslim League and the British Government. Pakistan, though a breakaway country, was however not born, as Bangladesh was, through the barrel of the gun. The Biafra war in Nigeria, in the sixties, was hardly a precedent for Bangladesh, for it had failed; and as in love, war and politics nothing fails like failure. Bangladesh therefore may be viewed as a lone forerunner of the ethnic states that have appeared on the world map in recent years.

Bangladesh's birth in the seventies occurred amidst an unfavourable political and economic international setting. The cold war was on, with all attendant complexities for a new-born country. Then too, the sudden rise in oil prices had created a difficult and uncertain economic situation. One of the superpowers, the United States, was then busy knocking at China's door and both these countries must have looked upon our independence struggle, as an ill-timed distraction, particularly when Yahya Khan had (not unlike Nero) chosen to play on the flute of US-China understanding, notwithstanding the fact that his own house was on fire.

To make matters worse for Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was in Pakistan custody, when the war was won on December 16, 1971, and most of the world waited and watched as Bangladesh commenced its quest for recognition. Sheikh Mujib's return to Bangladesh on January 10, 1971 eased the situation somewhat but did not, automatically, cause a spate of recognitions. Securing international recognition quickly and obtaining membership of the international agencies were therefore among the major challenges that Sheikh Mujib's Government faced.

Bangabandhu then took three steps that were to have a bearing on Bangladesh's rapidly gaining acceptance in the comity of nations. First and foremost was the withdrawal of Indian troops from Bangladesh. Sheikh Mujib allayed the fears of his countrymen by declaring on the very day of his return to Dhaka from Islamabad via the somewhat circuitous but safe route of London and Delhi, that the Indian troops would leave Bangladesh so wished. In February, 1972, after his meeting with Madame Gandhi in Calcutta, the date of withdrawal of the Indian troops was announced and

on March 12, 1972 the last of the Indian contingents left Dhaka. This, not only reassured the Bangladeshis, but also blunted the edge of the well-orchestrated propaganda, that Bangladesh was India's creation. It was then largely realised that though at that given point of time India's foreign policy thrusts and Bangladesh's national aspirations had coincided, it did not, in any way, negate the quality of Bangladesh's independence.

Second, the constructive and positive attitude that Bangabandhu took towards developing relations with Pakistan "Let by gones be by gones" was the dominant tenor of his attitude towards Pakistan, although understandably it was not always totally devoid of bitterness. But on the whole, the responsible and mature attitude that Bangladesh displayed at the tripartite Indo-Pakistan and Bangladesh talks helped hasten the process of normalization. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto even paid a visit to Bangladesh in 1974, when Bangladeshis welcomed him displaying a "forgive and forget" attitude. Economically those were very difficult days for Bangladesh. Bhutto misread our mood, and viewed our eagerness to negotiate outstanding issues, as weakness, and as such displayed an attitude that adversely affected the healing process. By then, however, a working relationship had already been set in motion at the tripartite level and matters moved ahead, though not as quickly as one would have desired.

Third, Sheikh Mujib displayed a remarkable statesmanship by underlining the importance of developing regional cooperation. Regional cooperation is a "by word" now but in the war-ravaged situation of those days, it must have called for courage and foresight on his part to declare in Calcutta on February 5, 1972:

"It is my earnest hope that there will at last be peace and stability in the subcontinent. Let there be an end, once for all, to the sterile policy of confrontation between neighbours. Let us not fritter away our national resources, but use them to lift the standard of living of our people. As for us we will not be found wanting to cooperate with all concerned for creating an area of peace in South Asia where we could live side by side as good neighbours and pursue constructive policies for the benefit of our people. History will not forgive us if we fail in this challenging task..."

Three years after Bangabandhu's death, President Ziaur Rahman's initiative in formally proposing the formation of SAARC was a concrete reaffirmation of this belief which aimed at fostering economic cooperation among the nations of the region.

All these three measures helped the dust of war to settle and enabled us to look beyond. Recognition poured in and Bangladesh established bilateral relations with many countries. It had become a member of the Commonwealth even when Pakistan quit it in 1972. Then again, cordial relations with India during those days were a matter of great strength to Bangladesh. At the same

time, Bangladesh's membership of the OIC demonstrated its willingness and ability to plough its own furrow when the occasion demanded. Sheikh Mujib was able to establish the foundation of our relations with the Arab countries which subsequently positioned us well to obtain much-needed oil with reasonable ease. Simultaneously,

this also facilitated an increase in remittances from Bangladeshi workers in those countries.

The then Soviet Union was the first country to which Bangabandhu paid a state visit in March 1972, and that country's help in clearing up our two clogged up, war-ravaged ports, facilitated the direly needed movement of goods across the seas.

Bangabandhu's visit to Japan in October 1973 was an eventful one. From a plethora of items in his brief, he focused on the Jamuna Bridge, that he said, would help "consolidate" Bangladesh's economy. This bridge owes a great deal to his initiative. The visit was a big step in making Japan, a consistent partner in our progress.

Bangabandhu took time from his pressing schedules at home to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings in 1973 and 1975 in Ottawa and Kingston respectively and the nonaligned summit in Algiers in 1974, during which he was able to introduce Bangladesh and to establish rapport with a large number of world leaders.

Bangladesh became a member of the United Nations in 1974 when China withdrew its veto, but it has to be said to the credit of Sheikh Mujib that from the very outset,

he demonstrated his belief in the importance of Bangladesh having cordial and friendly relations with that country. He had, in his younger days as a politician, visited China twice and his political mentor Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was the first Head of Government of Pakistan to have visited that country. Developing friendly relations with China

had always been high on Sheikh Mujib's agenda -- and soon after the creation of Bangladesh, a high-level Bangladesh trade delegation visited the then Canton fair and established contacts with the Chinese authority, if only to underline the priority that Bangladesh attached to developing Sino-Bangladesh relations. To Sheikh Mujib, the Chinese veto against Bangladesh's membership of the United Nations was a passing cloud that had to clear up sooner than later.

In 1974 when he went to New York to address the UN General Assembly, Henry Kissinger met him in New York and Bangabandhu went on to Washington to meet President Ford. Soon thereafter Kissinger, the US Secretary of State, visited Bangladesh and hopefully gained the impression that 'baskets' do not always have to remain 'bottomless.' Early personal contacts with US leaders such as Senator Edward Kennedy gave Sheikh Mujib the opportunity of expressing his thanks for the warm support our independence movement received from the US public, which eventually laid the foundation of the very meaningful relations that Bangladesh now enjoys with the United States.

Thus, it was that in a short span of three and a half years, in spite of innumerable odds, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was able to establish Bangladesh in the comity of nations. This he did with courage, tact and great statesmanship.

Faruq Choudhury was a Foreign Secretary of the Bangladesh Government.

The article was first published in The Daily Star on August 15, 1997

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তোমার দীপ্ত
প্রত্যয়ে
এগিয়ে চলা
বাংলার দুর্বার

জাতীয় শোক দিবসে জাতির পিতা
বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান
এবং তাঁর পরিবারের সকল শহীদদের
স্মরণ করছি গভীর শ্রদ্ধাভরে।

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Bangabandhu's Voice in Parliament: Moments of Inspiration



Bangabandhu delivering a speech at the Bangladesh Constituent Assembly (April 10, 1972)

“I do not know whether the Quaid-i-Azam's soul is at peace or not”

January 21, 1956

Here there is zamindari system, you know. Then you know who suffered for Pakistan the poor refugees but where they are living and what is their position. Big properties and lands have been left by Hindu and Sikh landlords and zamindars. But these properties have been taken away by the landlords coming from India, who were a privileged class, that land has not been equitably distributed among poor masses who are living in Lalookhet and near the Mazar of Quaid-i-Azam. I do not know whether the Quaid-i-Azam's soul is at peace or not, for them. They have no shelter, they have no land, why do not you distribute that land according to Islamic tenets? Do not do mockery to Islam, give them to the people. But you would not give these lands to people because you want to satisfy the privileged classes as you have to depend on privileged classes to govern this country. Although the condition of masses and refugees is so poor, these landlords have been given safeguards, in the constitution. We cannot change the constitution every now and then and how can you give lands to poor refugees and masses or to poor cultivators who are also Muslims, better Muslims than these big people they believe in Allah and say their prayers. How many rich people say their prayers I do not know but I have seen poor masses saying their prayers all right. Whether they have got their janamaz or not. You are making an Islamic constitution and you talk of Islamic ways but what you are giving in one way you are taking away in another way, and the poor masses have to suffer most.



“If justice fails, equity fails, fair play fails”

November 29, 1955

This is most objectionable attitude of the Government that we sit here for framing the Constitution for the people and two of our colleagues are detained in the jail. For Whom are you going to frame the Constitution? Are you going to give freedom of speech, freedom of action to the people of Pakistan. When you do not have any other law under which you can arrest a person, you haul him under this so-called

Public Safety Act. This is the blackest Act on the statute book of Pakistan. I do not know how long such an Act will continue. I want to warn you. Sir, that you must do justice to all people without fear or favour. If justice fails, equity fails, fair-play fails, then we will see how the matter is decided. I request the Prime Minister through you to do justice and take immediate action because his Government has arrested these persons and as such he has got the responsibility of seeing that these persons are immediately

released though he has said that his Government is not responsible for these arrests. But the East Bengal Government has said that these arrests have been made on the bidding of the Central Government. Sir, this is the position. Where can we go now? The Prime Minister should see that these M.C.A., S.M.L.A.S and other persons who have been arrested are released immediately and forthwith otherwise we will have to take some other action that my leader will tell you later on.

“There must be Parity in all respects”

February 4, 1956

It was stated that at the time of partition there was only one I.C.S. officer in East Bengal and there were no Engineers. I say that Bengal with 16 per cent literacy has only such a meagre representation in the service. Sir, this fact must be realised that it costs an individual Rs. 200 to come from East Bengal to this place. If you recruit in East Bengal and give a job you will find a large number of people from East Bengal coming forward. There are such a large number of

M.As. and B. As..... (Interruptions)..... Sir, my time has been spoiled.

There must be Parity in all respects. We do not say that you implement Parity at once. What we say is that unless and until Parity is reached, Bengalis must get first preference. We must co-operate and there should not be a stepmotherly treatment meted out to East Bengal. When you want a certain thing to be done, you agree to a thing and the next day you disagree.

There must be parity in all respects and not merely in the matter of representation.

Take the case of business. Bengalis do not get one per cent business. They come from East Bengal; stay in Hotels and spend Rupees ten or fifteen per day and go back without a licence.

And this is all by way of request. However, all this cannot continue for all time. We do not offer threats; we are brothers; we want co-operation and goodwill; we want to live together in Pakistan. But please do justice. If you fail to do, a time will come when the consequences may be disastrous.

“Creating a Golden Bengal is impossible without people with golden hearts”

October 12, 1972

Without a constitution, a country is like a rudderless boat, a sail-less boat. In a constitution, people will have rights, and along with those rights, they will also have responsibilities. Here, a free-style democracy may not prevail. In a constitution, the rights of the people will exist, along with responsibilities. And as far as possible, the form of constitution that has been adopted will remain a true symbol of the hopes and aspirations of the people, and I have no doubt about that.

Our ideals have remained pristine. Based on these pure ideals, Bangladesh achieved its independence. And guided by these ideals, this country will move forward. Nationalism - Bengali nationalism - this Bengali nationalism will flourish in

Bangladesh. With the essence of Bengal, its history, its skies and winds, and the blood of Bengalis, the nationalism of Bangladesh will thrive.

I believe in democracy and have faith in the people's right to vote.

We believe in socialism, where an exploitation-free society will exist. The exploiting class will never be able to oppress the people of the country anymore. And without socialism, seven and a half crore people cannot survive within fifty-four thousand square miles. Therefore, the economy will be socialist.

And there will be secularism. Secularism doesn't mean irreligiosity. Hindus will practice their religion; Muslims will practice their religion; Christians, Buddhists - everyone will practice their respective

religions. No one will interfere in someone else's religion; the people of Bengal do not seek to interfere in matters of religion. Religion will not be used for political purposes. Religion will not be exploited in Bengal for political gain. If anyone does so, I believe the people of Bengal will retaliate against them.

Based on these four ideals, the governance of Bengal will be established. This is what the people desire, what the people believe. People are fighting for this, millions of people have sacrificed their lives for this. It is with this ideal that a new society of Bengal will be built. Creating a Golden Bengal is impossible without people with golden hearts.

Translated by Sarah Bintay Shakhawat

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এখনও হৃদয়ে
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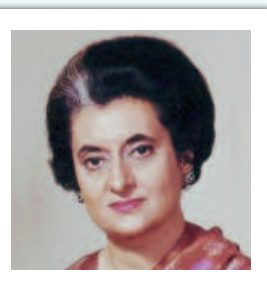
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BANGABANDHU

Through the Eyes of World Leaders

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He was a great leader. His extraordinary heroism has been a source of inspiration for the people of Asia and Africa

Indira Gandhi,
Former Prime Minister of India

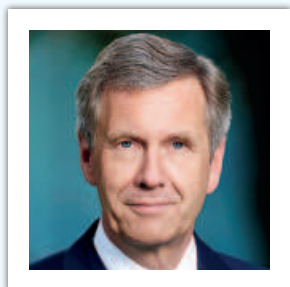
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I have not seen the Himalayas. But I have seen Sheikh Mujib. In personality and in courage, this man is the Himalayas

Fidel Castro,
Former President of Cuba

“



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a great statesman who fought for the rights and dignity of his people and was steadfastly committed to independence

Christian Wulff,
Former President of Germany

“



The speciality of Mujib's character was his uncompromising fighting leadership with a generous heart

Yasser Arafat,
Former Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization

“



This is surely a supreme national tragedy for you. For me, it is a personal tragedy of immense dimensions

Harold Wilson,
Former British Prime Minister, to a Bengali journalist upon hearing the news of the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

“



In the last few centuries, South Asia has given the world many teachers, philosophers, skilled statesmen, political leaders and warriors. But Sheikh Mujibur Rahman surpasses everything; his place is fixed in the highest position

Lakshman Kadirgamar,
Former Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka

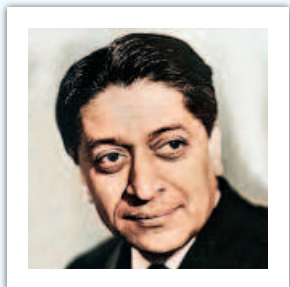
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I pay respect to a visionary leader and statesman, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He fought for freedom with unflinching courage despite the odds and adverse conditions

Sonia Gandhi,
Former President of the Indian National Congress

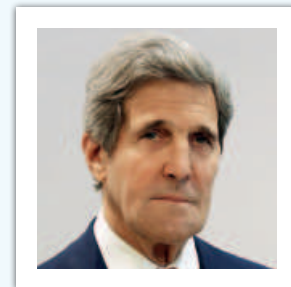
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Sheikh Mujib is a man of peace, a man of independence and a man of the world. He is not just the Bangabandhu (Friend of Bangladesh), He is also the Viswabandhu (Friend of the World)

Ramesh Chandra,
Former Secretary General of the World Peace Council

“



What a tragedy to have such brilliant and courageous leadership stolen from the people of Bangladesh in such a moment of violence and cowardice. But today, Bangladesh is growing in the vision of Bangabandhu

John F. Kerry,
Former US Secretary of State

“



Sheikh Mujib was a pioneer who fought for establishing people's rights and dignity in one of the most profound struggles for liberation in the twentieth century. The title of Bangabandhu bestowed on him reflects the extraordinary love that this patriot had for the people of his country

Pranab Mukherjee,
Former President of India

What happened at Bangabandhu's Burial Site

Halim enquired if the body had received a purifying bath. The reply was "no." Halim asked for permission to give the bath. The request was turned down. Halim refused to conduct janaza unless the body was washed. The officer and Halim exchanged hot words for a few minutes. Halim stood firm on his decision to conduct janaza only if Mujib's body was bathed.

NAIMUL HAQ

From quite a distance, the unagreeable vibrating sound of the rotor blades of a helicopter whirling around ominously alerted the inhabitants of Tungipara, 22 km from Gopalganj district town.

August 16, 1975 was a hot, humid day. It was well after midday when the giant Russian copter started circling above the dark bungalow of the village before delivering an unusual cargo. It was the coffin of the bullet-ridden body of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. A most unexpected way for a hero to come home.

"I was having my meal when I heard such an unusual sound of the copter", Abdul Makid Fakir, 52 recalls the day with visible emotion. "I ran out and found our neighbours looking up in the air with surprise. Then we saw the copter above the dark bungalow," said Fakir pointing towards the building, now a police station. It was a horrifying scene witnessed by hundreds of villagers.

"The copter stood still in the air until a platoon of troops armed with automatic weapons jumped off onto the ground and took up position in a circle to scare off any one daring to attack them. The copter slowly landed. We feared an attack on us by the troops. Words quickly spread that the copter was carrying Bangabandhu's coffin.

It was quite a surprise to see the coffin although, the whole village had already undergone a mortifying shock at the previous day's news of brutal killing of Bangabandhu, said Fakir.

Bangabandhu was killed in a bloody coup at his Dhanmondi residence in the capital in the early hours of August 15. Sixteen others, mostly Sheikh's family members, were also killed in the coup the same day marking the death of his entire family, except two of his daughters who were away in London. "We got the news of the assassination at around 9:15 am the same day. A wireless message first



Mausoleum of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Meanwhile, the villagers forced to stand away from the scene, wished to have a last look at the great leader. Kazi Enayet Hossain, 66, was among thousands of villagers who encircled the area to see what was going on. "We were anxiously waiting to see the body. Some of us became angry at the decision that we would not be allowed to see our leader. However, our emotion subsided as we saw the troops suddenly pointing submachine guns at us," said Hossain who rushed to the spot minutes before the coffin arrived. "The situation was tense. We feared gun shots to be fired at us while the army team feared that they might be attacked by the villagers."

The troops thought the people there might take revenge on them for having killed Bangabandhu. So, they wanted to hurry through the burial. They assumed tension would die down as soon as they flew off.

In the meantime, the wooden coffin had to be broken as there was no easy way to open it. "I along with four others helped open it. At first, I saw pieces of ice covering the body, said Nazrul Islam, 50. The ice did not appear as crystal as they should. They appeared brownish. The body gradually emerged as we removed the ice with our hands. The bullet-ridden body was at last before us. Every one tried to have a look.

Coagulated lumps of blood remained at the bottom of the coffin. A white folded piece of cloth lay on the chest of the body. I removed the cloth, suddenly my eyes were filled with tears. The more I stared at the body the more I cried. I saw Mujib wearing a lungi, white kurta and a vest. The clothes showed more than 20 bullet wounds. There was blood all over, says Islam murmuring Sheikh's name a number of times. "We bathed Mujib's body with a soap secretly brought from the nearby hospital and then wrapped it with two white sarees. It was an irony that the troops provided only a small piece of white cloth for Mujib's burial. We, however, avoided that and quickly wrapped the body with the sarees before they noticed anything."

"We were now ready for janaza. The troops also joined. It took only few minutes. As soon as the janaza was over the commanding officer directed the volunteers to complete the burial in 10 minutes. The troops stood by. About 14 people helped lower the body in the grave. The emotion in us grew stronger and stronger as we put the body down," said Islam nodding his head and saying, "I still cannot accept that our great leader is buried in that grave."

As soon as we completed the burial the local police were ordered to clear the place. They were strictly forbidden to allow any visitor inside the area.

The helicopter lifted off carrying the troops. Thousands of mourners watched as the copter vanished into the sky.

The graveyard was sealed off. Police patrol guarded the boundary of Bangabandhu's home, automatic guns were fitted on top of the roof for further security. Those who looked after the house were also asked to leave and live somewhere else. Nirmal Biswas, 41, who served as a servant in the house since he was 12, "I was kicked out by the police. They threatened to lock me up if I ever

to earn the highest respect as a leader. I was once arrested for attempting to go near the grave."

Many however risked defying the warnings just to see the grave. A dozen or so people were arrested. "How could they expect that we would avoid seeing Mujib's grave", said Ekram, 47. "This is Mujib's home, he grew up here, stayed in that house and climbed the stairs

How could we forget him. I will regret for the rest of my life for not paying the last respect to Mujib, said an old man in his eighties.

Bangabandhu will be in the hearts of thousands of inhabitants of Tungipara and its neighbourhood. The Remains of Mujib's bullet-ridden body rest perhaps in peace in the

white marble grave only 20 feet away from his house where he grew up as a child and was destined to be the founder of an independent country. One wonders if Mujib really rests in the soil of Tungipara or in the hearts of unknown millions of his people.

The article was first published in The Daily Star on August 15, 1994.



The final resting place of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

broke the news at Tungipara. It quickly spread across the village. It was terrible, few could absorb the shock of the death of the great leader," said Nawab Ali, 68, who often used to accompany Mujib to his public meetings.

Nawab Ali remembers how Mujib's grave was made. "A wireless message from the capital first ordered five graves to be readied. This confused us. As we wondered who were the five to be buried, a second message from Dhaka said two graves were needed. This was also confusing but we guessed that the second grave would be for Mujib's wife. We were halfway through the first grave when we were interrupted and told that only one grave was to be readied. We dug the grave only eight feet away from the graves of Mujib's parents.

Abdul Mannaf, 71, recalls how rough the officer in charge of the army teams was with them. Mannaf was among the 30 villagers selected to help in the burial. On arrival, the officer asked Maulana Abdul Halim of the village to conduct the funeral prayer for Mujib.

Halim enquired if the body had received a purifying bath. The reply was "no." Halim asked for permission to give the bath. "The request was turned down. Halim refused to conduct janaza unless the body was washed. The officer and Halim exchanged hot words for a few minutes. Halim stood firm on his decision to conduct janaza only if Mujib's body was bathed. From the very beginning the officer had been ordering the helpers to bury the coffin but Halim objected. At one stage Halim said the body would need no bath if it was given in writing that Mujib was a 'Shaheed'. The officer was in trouble and did not wish to waste any more time. He allowed the body to be cleaned before burial. The men were given only 15 minutes to complete the process. Halim asked for 30 minutes explaining that 15 minutes were not enough to complete the process. The officer agreed.

১৫ আগস্ট
জাতীয় শোক দিবস

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