

# NATIONAL MOURNING DAY 2023

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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 T 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. Dalmi 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 Papanek 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 shower 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.

**Matiul Islam** is a former Finance Secretary.

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