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PRESIDENT
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Message

Today is 16 December, our great Victory Day. On this day in 1971, we achieved our long-cherished victory after a long struggle and a nine-month bloodshed war. It gives us a sovereign country, independent nationhood, a sacred constitution, our own map and a red-green flag. On this joyous day, I extend my sincere felicitations and warm greetings to my fellow countrymen living in home and abroad.

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, the heroic freedom fighters, two faces oppressed women, the organizers and supporters of the Liberation War, foreign friends, war-wounded individuals and members of the martyrs' families including people of all walks of life 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. In its backdrop, there was a prolonged history of deprivation, sanguinary struggle and supreme sacrifice of our people. The dream journey of independence started with the great Language Movement in 1952, subsequently, came into reality 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 under Bangabandhu's leadership and guidance on 16 December 1971 through a nine-month long armed war of liberation against Pakistani invading forces.

Bangabandhu's aim was to attain political sovereignty as well as people's economic emancipation. Returning to the newly independent country from Pakistan's prison, keeping the aims of independence in mind, the Father of the Nation started his journey for achieving economic self-sufficiency by rebuilding economy and infrastructure of the war-torn country. He called for an agricultural revolution and launched a movement against corruption, black marketers, profiteers and looters. But the progress of democracy and development was halted after the brutal assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with his family members and relatives committed by anti-liberation forces on 15 August, 1975. Consequently, the journey to the democracy and development was obstructed; the autocratic and undemocratic government was emerged.

Bangladesh is now marching on the path of democracy and development. Imbued with the spirit and values of our Liberation War and Independence, the Government is making relentless efforts to materialize the unfinished tasks of Bangabandhu. With the successful implementation of 'Vision 2021' announced by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has now become a Middle Income country. In its continuation, Vision 2041 has been announced to turn Bangladesh into a developed and prosperous country. Despite various adversities, Bangladesh is achieving sustained economic growth continuously due to various welfare programs for mass people undertaken by the government. The country is advancing in every index of socio-economic development including health, education, women empowerment etc.

A new chapter has been opened in the history of development of Bangladesh with the implementation of the Padma Bridge—a unique milestone, Dhaka Metro Rail; Dhaka Elevated Expressway; Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel; Padma Bridge Rail Connecting Project and Dhaka-Vanga Rail Line; Chottogram-Cox's Bazar, Khulna-Mongla and Akhaura-Agorola Rail Connecting Project; Hazrat Shajalal International Airport-Third Terminal; Chottogram Elevated Expressway; Matarbari Thermal Power Plant; Purbachal Expressway; and Ghorashal Polish Urea Fertilizer Factory. Besides, Bangladesh became the member of world atomic club with the graduation of Ruppur Nuclear Power Plant. Currently, various geopolitical crises are causing global economic recession and spike in inflation when we could hardly mitigate the adverse affect of COVID-19 pandemic. The government has taken comprehensive programs including cost-cutting measures and providing various incentives to overcome the crisis. I hope, under the prudent leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina we will be able to overcome the crisis, Insha-Allah. All-out cooperation as well as a positive attitude of our people is imperative to take the ongoing development trend forward. Everyone should be vigilant so that political differences can not hinder our development process and social stability.

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. War cannot bring solutions to any crisis. Bangladesh believes that any crisis can peacefully be solved through dialogue. Bangladesh has strongly condemned Israel's heinous aggression, atrocity and bombing on mass people of Palestine including Gaza. Bangladesh will always stand by and extend unwavering support to the people and government of Palestine in establishment of their inalienable rights. Bangladesh is always sincere in humanitarian solutions of any international crisis. So far, Bangladesh has set a unique example of humanity in international arena by providing shelter to millions of forcibly displaced and tortured Rohingya refugees fled from Myanmar. It is my expectation that international community would take pragmatic and effective actions to solve the Rohingya crisis.

The role of expatriates in economic development of Bangladesh is undeniable. 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. I hope that during this global recession and economic crisis, our expatriates will continue to send foreign remittance and play a positive role in the country's development.

In order to deliver the benefits of independence at people's doorstep we need to institutionalize our democracy 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 by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and transform it as 'Smart Bangladesh' as declared by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina—this is my expectation on this great Victory Day.

Joi Bangla.

Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Mohammed Shahabuddin
Mohammed Shahabuddin

The Bangali Nation's Identity and Bangabandhu

Muhammad Shamsul Haque

Independence is the guarantee of governance by people's representatives after getting the nation's mandate through upholding its principles, policies and originality in all areas of life including language, culture, custom, heritage, economy and politics of a large population living inside a specific territory. Bangladesh is an independent and sovereign country having such a guarantee. The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the architect of this state. He introduced the Bangalis to the world community as an independent nation through his tireless struggles based on sustained planning and unrelenting courage even by betting his own life.

For any country, independence is such a priceless asset that it cannot be merely picked up from the ground; neither is it a theme that can be attained through a mere wish, or by saying 'become independent'. In the language of Professor Momtaz Uddin Ahmad, 'Independence is not an insistence for favour at uncle's home. Independence War is not the insolence of an inexperienced youth.' Generally speaking, the state is a perpetual concept that is based on the symbol and pledge of sovereignty. The freedom-loving people cannot live with contentment without a state that has sovereign powers.

It is expected and taken as an accepted norm that the government tasked with running the state will do so in accordance with the hopes and aspirations of the majority people based on their opinion by considering the social, cultural, and traditional viewpoints of the inhabitants of all regions in the country. The permanence of the state depends on how far the government can take just steps for upholding the nationalistic spirit, desired uplift of living-standard, security and rights of the citizens living in different regions.

If the state fails to establish just and equal treatment as well as equal rights for all communities in the population, then it gives rise to anger and frustration among the people. If the ruling class fails to investigate and solve the reasons for this anger and frustration, then the masses launch various systematic movements for changing the government in order to establish their rights. If the conduct of the government shows its discriminatory attitude towards particular races or communities, and finding solution through systematic path becomes difficult, then relevant nation or people proceeds towards removing the government through unconstitutional means. And once a journey on this path commences, the final solution in most cases results in achievement of independence or a separate state.

When people living in a country feels after passing through conflicts that it is not possible to coexist within the same state structure, then there remains the scope for constituting a separate and independent nation-state through discussions and understanding between the concerned people and the government. For example, two separate states named India and Pakistan were born in 1947 through discussions at one stage after many years of movements aimed at obtaining freedom from the British colonial rule. The last British Viceroy of India Lord Mountbatten declared the partition of India on 3 June 1947 after an understanding was reached between the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League. Following approval of the Indian Independence Act by the British Parliament, it received royal assent on 18 July 1947. After that, Pakistan and India became independent on 14 and 15 August of that year. Following the conclusion of the Second World War, many colonised countries of Asia and Africa also achieved independence like India and Pakistan through reaching understanding. During the decade of 1990s, seven Soviet republics including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Latvia received recognition as independent states by seceding from the hugely powerful Soviet Union through arriving at an understanding.

Ahmad Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta led the nationalist movement of the then Dutch colony Indonesia from 1929, and were involved with Indonesia's independence struggle for a long time. They signed the Declaration of Independence of Indonesia, which was announced on 17 August 1945. Holland accepted this declaration of independence two years later in 1947.

However, despite thousands of contradictions, the ruling coterie usually seeks to deny or suppress through various techniques or military might the rights and aspirations for independence of the freedom-seeking people. In this case, the concerned people have to prepare for sacrificing their lives and properties unquestioningly and selflessly by getting imbued with a common mantra and participation in unison for realization of shared goals. And tactful cum farsighted leaders are needed for taking such a preparation by making the people mentally and organizationally fit. Because, just as the process of liberation struggle is long, its outcome is also uncertain.

There are such examples before our very eyes. The Palestinian nation has not yet achieved independence despite fighting for over five decades against Israel on the Arab territories. Ian Smith had declared the independence of Rhodesia on behalf of a minority White government on 11 November 1965. The British government, the Commonwealth, and the United Nations had termed this declaration of independence as illegal, as the minority government was against the rule by the Black majority. Later on, Rhodesia received recognition as an independent country with the name Zimbabwe after a majority government was installed in 1980. Some Irish rebels had declared the independence of the whole of Ireland on behalf of the Irish people during the Easter Rebellion of 1916. But that declaration did not receive international recognition for 6 years as no elected representatives were involved. Later, the Irish Free State was established as an independent country in 1922. The northern part of Ireland was not included in this state.



Please Turn Over

A Cascade Of Aspirations On The Victory Day

Prof. Dr. Nuzhat Choudhury

On December 16, 1971, echoes of 'Joy Bangla,' 'Joy Bangla' is being resonated ubiquitously. The flag of independent Bangladesh is gracefully being hoisted from the rooftops of households throughout the besieged city of Dhaka.

The crowd has come down to the streets, chanting slogans, the free people of the liberated country are bursting with the jubilation of liberation.

A young woman of 28, is searching for a near and dear one among the faces in the processions.

They were supposed to join the procession, accompanied by their two children, as part of the victory celebration.

In the harrowing tale of a father, who risked his life during a curfew to come home for the moment of witnessing the first dawn of freedom alongside his daughters, unfortunately found himself unable to savor the initial moments of liberation with his kin. The man, who happened to be a doctor, was taken away yesterday afternoon for treatment of someone else. Throughout the processions, the young woman searches with hope in her heart for that face.

Little does she know, the cherished figure she sought fell victim to bullets and bayonets at the dawn of independence, paying the ultimate price by shedding blood from bosom for freedom alongside three million other martyrs. It remains a mystery whether he observed the initial glimmer of the eagerly awaited victory after the loosening of his blindfold.

It might sound like a movie plot, but this is no fictional tale. It is the chronicle of my mother's life, an odyssey entwined with my father's sacrifice—the true story of the intense pain before the birth of my country after a nine-month bloodshed war. The bloodshed of such history remains in every household, in every corner of this country. The bloodshed of such history stained with sacrifice remains in every household, in every corner of this country.

On the 18th, my father's bullet-riddled body was discovered at the Rayer Bazar killing ground. The illustrious personalities of the nation met a brutal fate, left to perish in the abattoir by the allies of the Pakistani ruling group—the Razakar-Albadar faction. For nine months, amidst a relentless onslaught of indiscriminate massacre, rape, the incineration of villages, looting, and torture, the Pakistani ruling group and their local allies failed to subdue the resolute, freedom-loving people of this country. Responding to the call of Bangabandhu, the valiant Bengalis waged an uneven conflict against the heavily armed Pakistani army with 'whatever they possessed.' As the war neared its conclusion, with the inevitability of defeat looming, they picked up and executed the top talents of this nation.

In fact, the killing of intellectuals commenced on the very night of March 25th, starting with the brutal killing of teachers from Dhaka University. This bloodshed persisted for nine months. Aware that defeat was inevitable, they executed

prominent figures from various professions to prevent the newly born country from moving forward to progress and development.

With the intention of identifying and torturing these people, their local accomplices, including the Muslim League, Jamaat-e-Islami, IslamiChhatra Sangh, Razakar, and the black sheep of Albadar, played a role in assisting the Pakistanis in this notorious crime against humanity.

After burying her husband, my mother entered the struggle of life. Navigating the journey as a school teacher was no easy task. Bangabandhu stood next to her. My mother immersed herself in the struggle to sustain life within a home provided by him. Accepting her self-sacrifice for the greater welfare of the country, she embarked on the arduous journey of a challenging reality, along with her two daughters. She wiped away her tears to witness the promising future of the country by belittling her own sufferings. In the pursuit of the well-being of the country, she sacrificed her dreams. Millions of family members of martyrs like my mother began their struggle for survival with tears in their eyes, relying solely on patriotism as their livelihood.

Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was a shade for the families of martyrs. He arranged the treatment of the injured freedom fighters. He introduced himself as the paternal identity of the Biranganas (assaulted women in the Independence

war). He organized the rehabilitation of war children. In the war-torn country, there was a dearth of funds, shattered infrastructure, and one crore refugees in India. Upon returning to the devastated nation, Bangabandhu initiated the process of rebuilding the country. Undertaking the significant responsibility on his shoulders to fulfill all the dreams of all the people, Bangabandhu focused on a challenging task. Bangabandhu was akin to a genuine paternal figure, casting a protective shadow over the families of martyrs like ours.

The ruthless assassination of Bangabandhu's family on August 15, 1975, severed both legs of this newly founded nation before it could even barely stand up. It was a complete disaster for the entire country, but for the families of the martyrs, it was the final nail in the coffin of their destruction. These individuals, who had already lost their families during the war, now found themselves without a guardian after the demise of Bangabandhu—the last shade removed from their lives. Not only the struggle for life, but again the wrath of the anti-independence came down on their heads. The killers of Bangabandhu and the conspirators behind the assassination belong to the defeated faction that opposed the independence of Bangladesh. Following Bangabandhu's assassination, those opposed to independence were seated on the throne of power. They remained in power for over two decades thereafter. For an extended period, the individuals who fought for the liberation war and liberated Bangladesh with their blood, those self-sacrificing patriots became the victims of torture.

As the son of a martyr, I can unequivocally tell that the downfall of the country, the stagnant state of the ideals of the liberation war, and the brutality of war criminal Razakars and the murderers of Bangabandhu have deeply dismayed the supporters of the liberation war, far more than their own personal sufferings. Those murderers transformed the country into a miniature version of Pakistan. The principles for which the Bengalis embarked on the war, aspiring for a progressive, democratic, and non-sectarian Bangladesh, were removed from the constitution. The century-long struggle of Bengalis to build a humane society free from exploitation through equity and social justice was crushed to dust at the barrel of a gun. Those who were adults in the decades of seventies and eighties know of the exhilarating days when our finance ministers would travel to affluent countries, carrying a begging bag, in the hope of securing foreign aid. Those who didn't want the birth of Bangladesh, those who do not hold love for the country - it was being acknowledged that there would be no progress or prosperity for this nation under their leadership. So, we, the individuals who ardently supported the liberation war in a state of thwarted anger and despair—how will the current generation of self-respecting and confident Bangladeshis interpret this today?

The journey to rescue the country and its ideals from the anti-independence factions and return to the path of the liberation war was not an easy one either. For democracy, for the ideals of the liberation war, for the formation of a non-communal, progressive, prosperous Bangladesh, the nation has to once again has to take shelter to the legacy of Bangabandhu's blood. Bangabandhu's daughter, Sheikh Hasina, the current prime minister, despite the risk of her own death, shouldered this difficult responsibility at the request of all at the critical juncture of the nation. The narrative of that bloody struggle is also profoundly tragic. Her life has been targeted in 18-19 incidents. All have watched the grenade attack on August 21st captured on camera reel. Have the recurring attempts of assassination come to an end? Even amidst conspiracies at home and abroad, she had to surmount numerous obstacles to remain determined to her ideals without ever going against the interests of the country.

The fundamental human right to seek justice for their father's murder was also snatched away from Bangabandhu's daughters. The Indemnity Ordinance shielded the perpetrators from accountability for such heinous killings. Can one wonder, such brutal culture of injustice existed then? After Bangabandhu's daughter and her party, the Awami League, came to power, the trial for

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