

16 December

THE GLORIOUS VICTORY DAY of BANGLADESH 2024



Special Supplement

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PRESIDENT
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
DHAKA

16 December 2024
01 Poush 1431

Message

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, a sacred constitution, our own map and a red-green flag. We also gained our existence and status in the world as an independent nation. On this jovial day, I extend my sincere felicitations and warm greetings to my fellow countrymen living in home and abroad.

I recall with profound respect 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 national leaders, the heroic freedom fighters, two lacs oppressed women, the organizers and supporters of the Liberation War, foreign friends, warwounded individuals and members of the martyrs' families including people of all walks of life who directly and indirectly contributed to our victory. I also remember those who accepted their martyrdom in various democratic movements along with anti-discrimination movement. 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 that started with the great Language Movement in 1952, subsequently, came into reality on 26 March in 1971 through the Proclamation of Independence, overcoming various ups and downs and by staging long movement and agitation. The final victory was achieved on 16 December 1971 through a nine-month long armed War of Liberation.

The ultimate goal of our Liberation War was to attain political sovereignty as well as people's economic emancipation. Keeping the aims of Independence in mind, the journey for achieving economic emancipation and the agricultural revolution began by rebuilding economy and infrastructure of the war-torn country. But even after five decades of the victory, people's economic emancipation has not yet been achieved. Time and again our democratic advancement and path to the economic freedom have been obstructed.

However, the development and progress of Bangladesh never been stopped. The country is advancing in various indices of socio-economic development including health, education, women empowerment etc. I think, the dream to build a discrimination and corruption free Bangladesh that people envisioned through the student mass uprising in July-August this year, will be realized soon. Bangladesh, the land of heroes, will be glorified in the world-Inshallah.

Bangladesh believes in world peace and harmony. War is not desirable for any country. Bangladesh believes that any crisis can peacefully be solved through dialogue. Bangladesh is always ingenious in humanitarian solutions of any international crisis. Bangladesh strongly condemn Israel's heinous aggression, atrocity and bombing on mass people of Palestine and Lebanon. Bangladesh will always stand by and extend unwavering support to the people and government of Palestine in establishing their inalienable rights. It is my expectation that international community would take effective actions to bring a permanent solution to this problem ensuring safe and dignified repatriation of the displaced Rohingyas stranded in Bangladesh.

The role of expatriates is evident in the economic development of Bangladesh. Expatriate Bangladeshis are making a significant contribution to the national economy by sending their hard-earned remittances to the country. We acknowledge 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 country's development.

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. Inspiring from the spirit and values of the anti-discrimination movement of 2024, let us contribute more from our respective positions to build a country free of corruption as well as to implement the goals of Liberation War and establish a society free from exploitation. Let us take the nation towards the path of development and prosperity and build a prosperous 'New Bangladesh'- this is my expectation on this great Victory Day.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Shahabuddin
Mohammed Shahabuddin

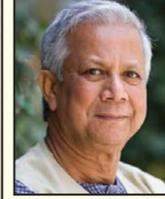
16 December 2024: A New Day of Victory

Brigadier General (R.) Dr. M Sakhawat Hussain ndc, psc

Although we are observing the 53rd Victory Day of our liberation and independence war on 16 December 2024, that war had commenced many years earlier, since the partition of India and the establishment of Pakistan. The struggle of the students and masses of the then East Pakistan against the exploitation and deprivations of the Bangalis was transformed into a fight for survival. That struggle against discrimination and exploitation had continued for a long time, similar to the blood-drenched struggle of the students and masses during July-August 2024 fifty-three years later. Exploitations and discriminations over a long period were again the reason behind this blood-drenched movement. But the struggle this time was not against any foreigners speaking a different language. Rather, the people emerged victorious by spilling blood following a movement waged by students and masses against the exploitations, deprivations, and discriminations perpetrated by the ruling coterie for about 16 years. That is why our youths have termed this a 'second independence'.

However, although there were no battles during the independence struggle earlier on, it started in full swing on the night of 25 March 1971, when the Pakistani forces appeared on the scene to slaughter the unarmed Bangalis. The war then commenced with the participation of the students-masses and the Bangali soldiers. It may be recalled that the nine-month long liberation war was organized and directed by a handful of fearless young officers of those forces, with the students and masses joining them gradually.

But the soldiers of that war, that is the young military and militia men and the students-masses, were also courageous like the participants of July-August Revolution of 2024. All segments of the country's population were bewildered when the Pakistani forces launched a sudden attack on the Bangalis in the midnight of 25 March 1971. The political leaders did not issue any directive then. Although Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was acknowledged as the leader of the Awami League,



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Message

Today is 16th December, Victory Day. This day is a very glorious and memorable day in Bangladesh's history. On December 16, 1971, we gained the taste of freedom and self-identity as a nation through the victory in the War of Independence. We get our desired freedom in exchange for the blood and sacrifice of millions of martyrs.

Victory Day is not only our source of pride but also our oath day. The oath is to remain united, protect the sovereignty of the country, and hold the spirit of the Liberation War.

On this day, we remember the brave martyrs of our freedom struggle with respect and honour their sacrifices. We promise to work together to build a developed, prosperous, and well-governed Bangladesh by the interim government formed through the mass uprising of the students, workers, and people.

We are determined to further develop and strengthen our country and enjoy the full benefits of freedom.

I wish Victory Day 2024 a great success.

Professor Muhammad Yunus
Professor Muhammad Yunus



which was the largest political party in Pakistan, he also remained inactive on the question of starting an independence war. It can be gathered from the books written by a number of leaders of the period that although the students and masses were

ready for building resistance in the face of the crackdown by the Pakistani forces from 25 to 27 March 1971, no announcement was made on behalf of any political leader urging the Bangalis to confront the enemy.

Please Turn Over

Victory Day: Memorable Day of Declaring Victory in the Inevitable Struggle for Bangladesh's Freedom

Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan, PhD

Victory implies the joyous message of ultimate freedom that is desired by all humans. This statement is more applicable in the context of the independence war that took place in Bangladesh during 1971. The memorable victory that the freedom fighters achieved against the Pakistani forces on 16 December 1971 was especially important and significant for all the people living inside the geographic boundary of Bangladesh. This independence struggle cum liberation war that continued for long nine months against the pseudo-colonialist Pakistani military rulers reached a final conclusion on the eventful day of 16 December. A new country called Bangladesh was born on that day through the surrender of the Pakistani army to the allied forces. Therefore, the Victory Day on 16 December is quite significant in the building of our independent nationhood and for presenting our national identity before the world community.

The victory achieved on 16 December 1971 had a long and painful background. East Bengal was incorporated into Pakistan in 1947 because of its Muslim majority during the partition of India following the end of British rule. It assumed the name of East Pakistan in accordance with the Constitution of Pakistan in 1955. All Bangali Muslim inhabitants of East Bengal were then optimistic about the prospects of their complete freedom due to their inclusion in an independent Pakistan free from British imperialism. This total freedom implied economic, political, and cultural freedom.

However, the people of East Bengal became disillusioned within a short time. This was because, the rulers and people of West Pakistan started to exploit the Bangalis anew by playing the role of pseudo-imperialists. Although Pakistan was constituted with two distant territories – East and West Pakistan – there were huge differences between the two in terms of linguistic, anthropological, and socio-economic contexts. Consequently, the people of West Pakistan started nurturing the idea of providing leadership to the Bangalis through exploitation. As a part of this stance, they attempted to take away the cultural independence and linguistic rights of the Bangalis.

The architect and Governor General of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited Dhaka in 1948. He declared during a public meeting held at



Racecourse Ground near Dhaka University on 21 March that 'Urdu shall be the lone state language of Pakistan'. The students lodged a strong protest immediately after this announcement by Jinnah. Movement against the Pakistanis commenced in this way, and this agitation centring on linguistic right gradually spread to all corners of East Bengal. Its final form was witnessed on 21 February 1952, when the Pakistani policemen opened fire on the advancing students and masses in Dhaka who broke the unfairly imposed section-144. Numerous youths including Salam, Rafiq, Barkat, and Jabbar had to embrace martyrdom as a consequence.

The Pakistani government had to accept the heartfelt demand of the Bangalis as a result of this bloodletting, and Bangla was accorded recognition as the principal state language in the Constitution of Pakistan.

Please Turn Over

16 December 2024: A New Day of Victory



Party of Bullets Hasan Robayet

Then the horse of Isa Khan from Baro Bhuiyan clan
Was listening to music while reclining on a breeze,
Who were the people reading the verse of Charyapada?
How far was Kanhapa from the lanes of Dhaka!

Here beside the house laughs the whole day
Low-caste paramour with sovereign smile,
Bakhtiar and Chand Ray drinks forever side by side
Water from Mohua's hand.

Matiur blossoms from the clouds of Palashi –
Who are the people crying in the marsh of water-lily?
The sister of Bangladesh dangles alone unconcerned
From the summit of that infinite space!

Is liberty then a pseudo dialect of Khana?
Would the tailors arrive to sew the words?
The offspring of Shah Jalal would give up life –
And a she-demon would swallow our freedom?

There is now striped breeze in the tide of noon
Since when did Isa Khan latch the bolt of valour?
Victory is like a party of laughing bullets
– On the petals of people's blood.

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed

The attack by the Pakistani forces first started simultaneously against the Bangali troops of the then EPR (now BGB) and the members of East Pakistan Police force at Rajarbag, where a majority were Bangali constables. Many were martyred during these sudden attacks, but a sizeable number tried to build up resistance on their own with arms at their disposal. On the other hand, although the young officers and soldiers of 2nd East Bengal Regiment at Joydebpur near Dhaka, a majority of whom were Bangalis, were ready to repel the impending Pakistani attack, no such directive was issued to them. Similarly, although armed assaults were launched against the Bangali soldiers at different locations across Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan), they were not organized though they tried to defend themselves. As a consequence, many young Bangali officers and soldiers were martyred. Besides, although resistances were built up at various places, the nation remained directionless up to 27 March 1971.

Finally, a mid-ranking officer of 8th East Bengal Regiment Major (later sector commander, army-chief and martyred president) Ziaur Rahman took the initiative to declare independence by using the broadcast-relay equipment of Chattogram Kalurghat radio station. This declaration later helped the Bangali nation, especially the soldiers, to come together and protect the country from the invaders, and also provided direction for achieving independence. At that time, another outstanding sector commander and renowned freedom fighter late Major (later Brigadier) Khaled Mosharraf was in Sylhet. Khaled Mosharraf had acknowledged that he got a direction after that declaration by Ziaur Rahman on 27 March 1971. They then moved to take shelter in India by crossing the border and to take preparation for waging the independence war. However, he initially continued the warfare by remaining inside the country for many days. Similarly, the Bangali soldiers, police and EPR-men of Dhaka, Jashore and Cumilla also revolted. Later, they all came together under the leadership of East Bengal Regiment.

Later on, the leaders of the autocratic regime ousted in 2024 tried to establish the historical narrative of giving full credit for independence to their sole leader of that era late Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, which does not stand the scrutiny of logic and factuality. That was because, their claims were unfounded and incoherent. It was said that somebody took a chit from the residence of Sheikh Mujib at midnight of 25 March and propagated his declaration through the radio set up at the EPR (now BGB) headquarters. I consider this claim to be totally illogical. That was because, the Pakistani forces had taken control of all broadcasting equipment, radio and wireless-sets before the midnight of 25 March. In that case, the theory of using EPR radio (wireless) set does not pass the test of logic.

The war and the independence of Bangladesh are two different matters. Although the assistance received from India must be acknowledged, that help was not extended merely for establishing the right of self-determination of the Bangalis. The huge gains made by India through this have been noted by both the geo-political and ordinary analysts of that country. In whatever manner the war might have started, it became a people's war due to the participation of the masses. The Kaderia Bahini was an example of this people's war. The allied forces launched the final attack on the Pakistani military that was facing defeat due to the outstanding roles played by the Muktibahini, different forces including the Crack Platoon, Bichchhu Bahini, Bangladesh Liberation Forces, etc., as well as for geo-strategical reasons.

All these led to our Victory Day on 16 December 1971. On that day, the biggest act of surrender in the military history of the world took place at the racecourse ground of Dhaka, when the Pakistani military surrendered to the allied forces. But there was no formal representation from Bangladesh at the event. The then deputy chief of the Muktibahini Air Commodore (later Air Vice-Marshal and AL minister) A K Khandaker was present there through own initiative. Despite that, the greatest victory in history for the 75 million (population at that time) freedom-seeking Bangalis materialised on 16 December 1971.

We the Bangladeshis are proud of our freedom. We are proud of 16 December as well. This independence was not donated to us by anyone; rather, it was achieved at the cost of lakhs of lives and the honour of lakhs of mothers and sisters. In the annals of the Bangalis, it was for the first time that Bangla could become an independent and sovereign land. This country must not be allowed to fail, nor should it be subservient to anyone, just as the students and masses have shown by shedding blood during July and August this year.

This Victory Day on 16 December will not be a second in the series, rather it will be a new and complete Victory Day.

(The writer is Adviser for Shipping, Labour and Employment)

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed



Eternal War of Freedom Rawshan Ara Mukta

The fallen leaves fly with the dusts of highway
At the foot of flyover where the workers live,
On days of blazing sun alongside the footpath
In the crowds of speedy buses, the fallen leaves fly
– From town to village, with the charter of eternal freedom.

The fallen leaves fly for a thousand years on the nights of Baul song
Walking beside devout men offering prayer at dawn
In the festival of Shiva, carnival of Boisabi, full-moon of Dol-Purnima.
In the joy of harvesting crops and the laughter of farmers
The fallen leaves fly from one shrine to another on Shabe-Barat night
– Seen in the flashes of star-crackers reflected in the eyes of children.

These accounts of pre-historic flights denoted love,
But inside remains the seal of hatred, tales of aversion, and
Wrapped in a packet of love above – what took place at Rajarbag?
And what happened at Jatrabari? Men were killed by men,
Even now, the dwellings of people are being burned by the same fire!

Even now the fallen leaves fly, the roads shake with the sound of slogans
Even now, the fallen leaves go to war, leaving behind letters for parents
Even now the fallen leaves cry, on seeing the mark of bullet that kills daughter.
Even now, the fallen leaves seek freedom! All poems of unseen triumph –
Are written by those fallen leaves, Oh, the fallen leaves!
The girl Felani keeps on hanging from the barbed wire at the border.

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed



Victory Day: Memorable Day of Declaring Victory in the Inevitable Struggle for Bangladesh's Freedom

Although the linguistic right of the Bangalis was established through the language movement that culminated in the events of 21 February 1952, the then Pakistani government started to interfere with the economic and political rights of the Bangali people of East Pakistan. For example, the foreign currency earned by East Pakistan through export of jute and other agricultural commodities were mostly spent for economic and industrial growth of West Pakistan. As a result, the Bangalis were deprived financially on a massive scale.

Alongside linguistic and economic exploitations, the undemocratic forces of West Pakistan also created obstacles to the practice and flourishing of our free political thought. They resorted to extreme repressive measures against political demands, movements, processions, meetings, etc. organized by the Bangali citizens of East Pakistan. As a result, their exploitative and autocratic attitude became quite noticeable. The students' movement of 1962, the 6-point movement of 1966, and the non-cooperation movement cum mass-upsurge of 1969 in East Pakistan bore testimony to that. The launching of the aforementioned movements demonstrated the efforts and agitations by the Bangali people of East Pakistan for establishing their right of self-determination in the face of coercive rule by West Pakistan. Through these movements and struggles, the Bangalis basically prepared the ground for their independence movement and total freedom.

Before the laying of this ground, the Pakistani rulers created huge hindrances in the exercise of our political rights. They obstructed the flow of democracy by ignoring the outcome of parliamentary election held in 1970. The people of East Pakistan were deprived of their political right due to the dilly-dally tactics of Pakistani rulers. Consequently, the Bangali people had to take final preparation for their independence struggle. As a continuation of this trend, the independence war of the Bangalis commenced on 26 March 1971.

The Pakistani armed forces brutally pounced on the unarmed Bangali population during this struggle cum war, and started killing innumerable people quite unjustly. The armed resistance and fightback by the students-workers-masses then commenced. In this way, all Bangalis including the soldiers got directly involved with the independence war of Bangladesh. Spanning long nine months, this war ultimately ended on 16 December 1971, when the Pakistani military finally surrendered to the allied forces and the freedom fighters of Bangladesh. The final victory in our

nine-month-long armed struggle was achieved in this way, and a new independent country called Bangladesh emerged on the world map.

The Victory Day on 16 December is significant in our national life for multiple reasons. Firstly, our political independence was achieved through this victory. This political freedom ensured our sovereignty, which is essential and inevitable for an independent country like ours. We got an independent territory spread over 56 thousand square miles through this triumph on 16 December, where our red and green national flag that symbolises our victory, independence, and sovereignty flutters in the air. The infiniteness of our vast green fields that stretch from one horizon to another, and the sunrise at dawn that arouses limitless dreams and enormous possibilities mingle with the colour of this flag.

This historic victory has bestowed us with a national anthem that praises the motherland and projects our identity and uniqueness at various programmes staged inside and outside the country. All in all, this historic triumph on 16 December 1971 has become a memento of our existence for all citizens of Bangladesh.

On the occasion of this unforgettable and emotion-filled 16 December – reminiscent of Bangladesh's War of Independence, I recall with reverence all our leaders, as well as the military, civilian, professionals and students-masses, who made this struggle a success. I recall with reverence all freedom fighters including those who embraced martyrdom in the battlefield – whose infinite sacrifices resulted in Bangladesh standing in the comity of nations today with her head held high.

On this noble occasion of final victory on 16 December, I particularly wish to recall the martyrs who embraced martyrdom during the mass upsurge of 2024. They were the freedom fighters of this new Bangladesh. We got a new Bangladesh free from the stains of autocracy on 5 August 2024 due to their self-sacrifices. Just as the freedom fighters of 1971 made supreme sacrifice during the independence war of 1971

for bestowing us with a new country, territory and sovereignty, similarly, the new freedom fighters of 2024 have gifted us a new and promising Bangladesh that should be free from discrimination and autocracy. We firmly believe that the dreams of the martyrs who had sacrificed their lives during the 1971 War of Independence as well as those of the freedom fighters of 2024 will materialise only if we can build a modern and progressive Bangladesh free from all kinds of discrimination and communalism.

(The writer is Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University.)

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed

