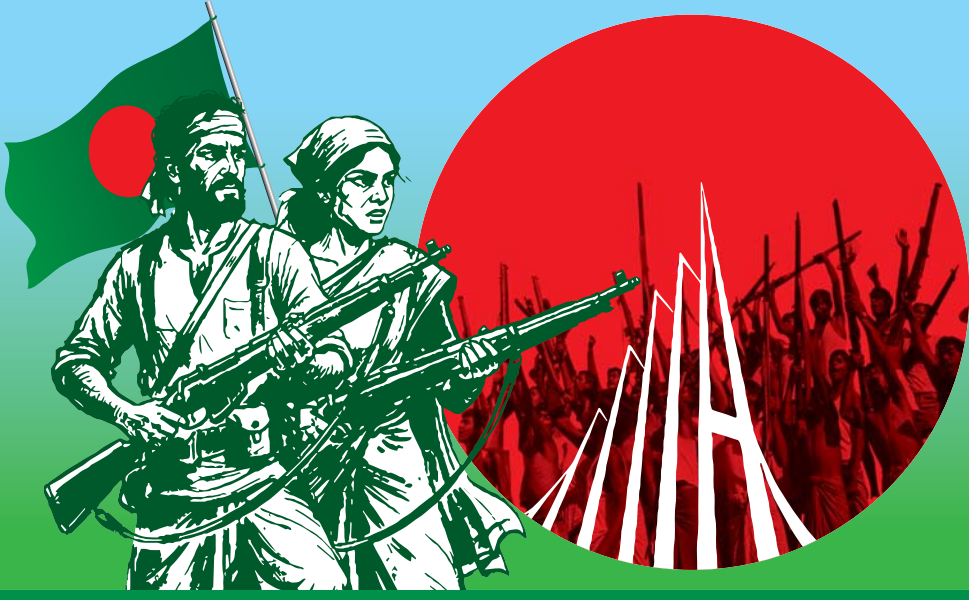




# 26 March Great Independence and National Day of Bangladesh 2026

Independence



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PRESIDENT  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH  
BANGABHABAN, DHAKA.

12 Chaitra 1432  
26 March 2026

## Message

On the occasion of the great Independence and National Day, I extend my heartfelt greetings and warm felicitations to all Bangladeshis at home and abroad.

Independence is the greatest achievement of our nation. On this solemn day, I remember with profound respect the valiant martyrs who laid down their lives in the great War of Liberation, whose supreme sacrifice secured our independence. I also pay a humble tribute to Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, Bir Uttam, along with all valiant freedom fighters, the persecuted mothers and sisters, the national leaders and organizers, and the countless people from all walks of life who made outstanding and significant contributions to our historic struggle for freedom.

The extraordinary sacrifices of our brave freedom fighters continue to inspire us to move forward with renewed confidence in building a modern Bangladesh founded on equality, justice, democracy, and human dignity. The objectives of our independence were to ensure political and economic freedom, establish a society free from exploitation, uphold the dignity of every citizen, and strengthen the empowerment of people at all levels. We must strive to realize the unfinished aspirations of our independence by ensuring equality, good governance, transparency, and accountability across all spheres of the state and society. It is our sacred duty to build a safe, prosperous, and compassionate Bangladesh for future generations.

The adverse impacts of prolonged misgovernance, global economic challenges, and unexpected energy crises continue to affect our country and its people. The government remains committed to addressing these challenges with utmost sincerity and competence while pursuing efforts to build a self-reliant, dynamic, and just Bangladesh. At this moment, strong national unity, mutual empathy, and patriotism are of paramount importance.

I call upon the people of our country, regardless of party, opinion, or path, to work together in building a just, self-reliant, secure, and productive Bangladesh for present and future generations.

On this occasion of the great Independence and National Day, I wish every success to all programmes undertaken to commemorate this historic day.

Mohammed Shahabuddin



## The Pledge of Independence Day

Professor Dr. Anwarullah Chowdhury

Independence is the outcome of a dedicated pursuit across hundred reincarnations of man's existence. In his famous book 'The Social Contract', the French philosopher Rousseau had said, "Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chain". That means, man is born as a free entity, but becomes enchained to subjugations later on; only humans know the essence and joy of independence. All humans seek to live independently by upholding their honour. But it is such an object that cannot be obtained through mere wishing. Much sacrifices have to be made for that. There are many nations in the world who could not achieve independence for motherland despite trying for ages. The Bangalis used to be ridiculed once as cowards. But the people of Bangladesh have proved over the years that they are a nation of heroes – not cowards. The valiant sons of time – the people of Bangla are fond of freedom, and know that a price has to be paid for that. Gold used to be produced from the soil of this land. But the lifestyle of the people of Bangla has been very simple. There is an old adage that the deer becomes a target because of its tasty meat. The situation in Bangla was similar. The abundance of resources in this land have instigated the enemies to capture it repeatedly. Its natural beauty and affluence have attracted the outsiders to visit Bangladesh.



According to the 17<sup>th</sup> century French traveller Francois Bernier, "There are hundred gates open to enter Bengal, but there is not a single gate to come out of it". It implied that the affluence and natural beauty of Bangla attracted people so much that anyone would happily go there, but none would seek to come out of it. Although that affluence of 17<sup>th</sup> century Bangla has diminished to a large extent, the invading forces repeatedly attacked it to capture its throne.

When the people of Bangla are united, they can achieve the impossible. We have repeatedly understood the truth of the adage: 'Unity is power, division is destruction'. When the people of Bangla became divided on account of vested interests, they were defeated by foreign powers. On the other hand, when they became united by shunning selfish gains, none could snatch victory from them. The people of Bangladesh were able to snatch the sun of freedom from the occupying Pakistani forces because of the strong and steely unity they forged in 1971.

The people of Bangladesh are traditionally peace-loving. But they are unwavering on the question of their motherland's freedom. They are not ready to sacrifice their independence in

Please Turn Over



PRIME MINISTER  
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
BANGLADESH

12 Chaitra 1432  
26 March 2026

## Message

On the occasion of the Great Independence and National Day, 26 March, I extend my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to the people of Bangladesh at all levels, as well as to all Bangladeshis living abroad.

March 26 is a glorious and historic day in our national life. On this day, I remember with profound respect the nation's finest sons, whose sacrifices enabled us to achieve an independent and sovereign Bangladesh. At the same time, I recall with deep gratitude the brave freedom fighters who took part in the Liberation War, the mothers, sisters who suffered oppression and all those who devoted themselves to the struggle for independence. I pray for the eternal peace of the departed souls of all the martyrs.

The Great Independence Day inspires us anew with the spirit of courage, sacrifice and patriotism. The fundamental goal of independence was to establish a Bangladesh that is free from discriminations, and to be democratic, peaceful and prosperous.

Keeping that goal before us, we must work together and continue to move the country forward.

To further accelerate the progress and development of our beloved motherland, we must uphold in our hearts the spirit of national unity, mutual tolerance and patriotism.

Let us draw inspiration from the significance of the Great Independence and National Day and dedicate ourselves, from our respective positions, to the welfare of the country. Together, let us work to build a developed, prosperous and dignified Bangladesh.

I wish every success to all programmes organised on the occasion of the Great Independence and National Day.

Tarique Rahman



## We Recall the Martyrs with Reverence

Mahbub Ullah

Today is 26 March, the 56th Independence Day of Bangladesh. Fifty-six years is not a brief period. We were supposed to achieve many things during these years. However, it must be acknowledged that just as we have made considerable progress in some areas, we are similarly lagging behind in many others. We are still searching for freedom even after 56 years; we are still in search of sovereignty, democracy, universal human rights, and a socioeconomic apparatus devoid of discriminations. If we ask ourselves: how much have we been able to fulfil these aspirations? The answer is, we shall have to travel a long path for achieving these. There is no alternative to that. However, it can be said with confidence that if we all try to conscientiously discharge our duties with sincerity for the country and the nation as citizens of an independent state, then we are bound to reach our desired goals. All citizens of the country will have to work selflessly for achieving these objectives.



March 26 is our Independence and National Day. But we could not expel the invading Pakistani forces from our soil on this day. Rather, the Pakistani military pounced on the unarmed people of Bangladesh like ferocious Hyenas in the last hours of 25 March and the first hours of 26 March. The university students, hard-working labourers, rickshaw-wallahs, pushcart-drivers, university teachers, and people belonging to the minority community were not spared from their assaults. This was despite the fact that the people of both East and West Pakistan founded the state of Pakistan by joining hands in 1947. The people of the then East Pakistan led all other stakeholders in sacrifices and struggles for the creation of Pakistan. But it was unfortunate that although Pakistan came into being based on the ideal of Muslim brotherhood, the majority of its population in East Pakistan were victims of huge discriminations. Whether on the question of constitution, the economy, politics, and above all language and culture, the Punjab-based Pakistani feudal lords, capitalists and civil-military bureaucracy resorted to one conspiracy after another to make us weak and snatch away our rights. For these reasons, disillusionment and anger got consolidated in the then East Pakistan or East Bengal. The Pakistani rulers resorted to violent repressive measures for suppressing the movements and struggles based on the 6-point demand for full regional autonomy and the 11-point demand for democracy, autonomy, and the elimination of discriminations.

Earlier, the Pakistani rulers killed the students and protesting people for silencing them when they demanded the right to speak in their mother-language. The grievances and a sense of deprivation multiplied day by day. At last, a Pakistan-wide election was held in 1970 based on proportional representation. The Awami League won a majority in that election. But the then military government of Yahya started to dilly-dally on the question of handing over power. They resorted to various intrigues and misdeeds. Finally, the Pakistani forces launched a military campaign code-named 'Operation Searchlight' by rejecting the just demands of the majority party within a political dispensation. They started to commit a genocide against the Bangladeshi people. The people of Bangladesh found that the bond forged in 1947 did not exist anymore. In exchange, the people of this country were subjected to killings, setting things on fire, and the barbarism of rapes. In this way, the bond that was forged with the Pakistani state-structure was broken. At that time, we were not yet free from the shackles. But we shifted to a new stance in the world of awareness. Becoming imbued with the spirit of independence, we pledged not to remain enchained to the Pakistani state. That is how the Independence and National Day arrived on 26 March. We no longer had any mental attachment with Pakistan from that day.

The people of this country became bewildered when genocide was started by the Pakistanis on the dark night of 25 March. For them, there was no political guidance for the future. However, on 27 March, Major Ziaur Rahman declared the independence of Bangladesh on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from Kalurghat Radio Centre. It was in fact Sheikh Mujib's responsibility to do that. But Ziaur Rahman took up that responsibility at great risk. The countrymen heard his declaration of independence. Thereby, a bewildered nation started to see rays of hope by becoming invigorated on hearing that declaration. The people came to know that the liberation war had commenced, and the Bangali soldiers, EPR, and policemen were at its centre. The war of liberation raged on for long nine months. But just when hundreds of thousands of freedom fighters cornered the Pakistani military by fighting gallantly against them, the Indian armed forces intervened in this war.

Then within three to four weeks, a situation arose when the Pakistani forces had no other option but to surrender. The Pakistani military surrendered to the Indian Eastern Command at Dhaka's racecourse ground on 16 December. Lieutenant General Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi signed the surrender document on behalf of Pakistan. But it was very sad that the commander-in-chief of the Bangladesh Forces General M. Ataul Gani Osman could not remain present at the ceremony, or was not allowed to remain there. The glory of victory was thereby tarnished to a great extent, as the commander of the liberation forces that ensured victory by shedding blood in this land could not remain present at the surrender ceremony. It also took away the lustre from a ceremony marking national democratic revolution; the revolution remained incomplete, according to political science analysts. The helicopter that General Osman was riding was mysteriously fired upon. The glory of our victory also became bullet-ridden in this way.

The history of our independence goes back many years. The sun of our freedom had set on the plains of Palashi back in 1757. The standards of the traders then became royal decrees. The British East India Company snatched away this country's freedom. Then occurred the first Indian War of Independence in 1857. In this war, the Bangali sepoy Mangal Pandey embraced martyrdom by fighting heroically. The fight for freedom was thereafter led by Syed Ahmad Barelvi; the peasants of Bangla who fought against the British indigo traders; and the battle waged from a bamboo-fortress under the leadership of the martyr Titumir. These were followed by the battles led by Fakir Majnu Shah, the peasants' uprising in Pabna, the Faraizi Movement, the partition of Bengal, and the rescinding of that partition. The naval revolt by sailors on board the British Royal Navy ships took place in 1946; there was also a mass-revolt against the trial of the leaders of Azad Hind Fauj.

The British colonial rule came to an end in 1947. This was followed by the movement for state-language Bangla in Pakistan. The Jukta-Front Alliance achieved a landslide victory in the election of 1954. Then there was a movement against the military rule of Ayub Khan in 1962, the 6-point movement of 1969, the upsurge of students and masses in 1969, the non-cooperation movement in March 1971, and lastly the armed War of Independence in 1971. We won our beloved habitat Bangladesh after crossing so many ups and downs and numerous vicissitudes in the course of history. In this way, we got 26 March as our Independence and National Day. This day is undoubtedly a day of glory and pride. We shall take a solemn pledge on this day to complete our incomplete national democratic

revolution in the coming days. Only then would an independent, sovereign, affluent, and discrimination-free Bangladesh materialise; the country would then become an abode of peace for its 180 million inhabitants.

Now, how can we make Bangladesh an abode of peace for its 180 million citizens? For that, we have to achieve economic, social, and cultural freedom. We could achieve advancement in the economic arena during the post-independence period. Our national income has increased; per capita income has also risen. Despite that, this progress is not



satisfactory. Although poverty and hardcore poverty decreased as per our expectation since 1991, the poverty rate once again started to rise after 2021. Now, 40 million people in the country live below the poverty line. Naturally, employment generation is needed for reducing poverty. And swift industrialisation cum flourishing and transformation of agriculture are required for employment creation. Investments have to be raised for achieving this objective. At present, only 22 to 23 percent of the country's GDP is used for investments; but savings and investments must be increased for realizing high growth rates. Domestic and foreign investments have to be raised simultaneously. The task may be difficult, but it is not impossible.

Our economic advancement has remained one-sided. The readymade garments industry dominates the industrial sector. But this industry is also not risk-free. Counter-tariffs imposed by the United States have created problems for this sector. There are reports that the European Union is also seeking to clamp down additional duties on the RMG sector, similar to the USA. This would put this industry under severe stress, although it employs 4 million workers – most of whom are women. Our energy crisis has exacerbated due to aggression against Iran in the Middle-East by the USA and Israel. In this situation, preserving and expanding the benefits of independence have become difficult. We can build a well-structured industrial sector if we pay attention to some of the industrial sub-sectors. The promising industrial sub-sectors in Bangladesh are leather, pharmaceutical industry, and manufacture of jute goods. Besides, many other types of industries including small and medium enterprises can flourish in this country if proper state-assistance and policy support are extended.

Today, it is our national duty to ensure industrial diversification and prosperity. But many big obstacles remain on that path. Bangladesh would lose the benefits it received as a least developed country when it graduates into a middle-income nation from that of an LDC. For this reason, we should remain steadfast in expanding and diversifying our industrial sector.

The state of development of a country depends mainly on how advanced it is in the fields of science and education. The number of educational institutions in the country has risen manifolds after our victory in 1971. But compared to quantitative expansion, qualitative improvement is almost non-existent. The biggest challenge before the nation now is qualitative improvement of education. Good teachers are needed for this. We cannot expect a good education system without good teachers. Many unqualified teachers have entrenched themselves in our education system due to politicisation, nepotism, and corruption. It is not easy to expel these people. On the other hand, the quality of graduates for the job-market has also nose-dived with the exception of a few. These graduates are also becoming teachers at schools, colleges, and universities. The whole education system

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## Audacity 1971

Hasan Hafiz

Killings indiscriminate led to people's resistance  
The drums of war reverberated all around.  
The blaze started at valiant Chattala; then across the country.  
A people's war commenced; all-out; pledge-bound till death; no scope for retreat.  
Life was on fire; liberation war was like a burning volcano.  
Eruption of a lava-flow; all aflame; that was the lone truth.  
No other objectives; the pledge was to rid motherland of enemies.  
People's war all around; the soil was changing; becoming stones.  
Villages, towns, ports; everywhere the glare of kettle-drums; only revenge.  
Evict the enemy; effect revenge; tooth for tooth.  
Make freedom's flower bloom; it can't blossom without blood and life.  
Doesn't know in what other way to bloom; no such example in world history.  
Learnt the techniques of guerrilla warfare; students, youths, peasants, workers.  
Weapons in hand with heroic pride; slaughter of enemies continued.  
How far was victory? How much more blood you seek – o' freedom?  
What more tests, loss of honour? How much more destruction, disaster?  
How many more tests of patience? Resolve amplified day by day; rage as well.  
The flame of anger got transformed by the immense verve of power; valour infinite.  
And then finally; the dawn arrived; a new horizon by ripping the womb of darkness.  
The bright hue of sun on the eastern sky; sunlight, life, victory, triumph.  
The sun filled its sphere with blood; such is the way of the world.  
Freedom has materialised from faith; ready for yet another war if needed.  
This sun has never set, will never set; that cannot happen ever.

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed

## The Pledge of Independence Day

exchange for anything. Bangla has been repeatedly subjugated by foreign powers. But the people never accepted defeat over a long stretch of time.

Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971. The contexts of our liberation war and achievement of independence were different. But the Bangladeshi people did not dream of an independent state all of a sudden. This independence movement had a long background. It would be erroneous if we claim that the Bangladeshis suddenly snatched freedom for their motherland by fighting against the Pakistani invading forces in 1971. Two independent states named Pakistan and India were born in 1947 based on the two-nation theory. The Muslims of the subcontinent started to dream about an independent country based on the historic Lahore Resolution of 1940. The undisputed leader of Bangla Abul Kasem Fazlul Huq



(Shere-e-Bangla) put forward the Lahore Resolution. The dream of an independent Bangladesh was embedded in that original Lahore Resolution. That original resolution introduced by AK Fazlul Huq stated that one or more independent states would be formed through inclusion of Muslim-majority adjacent areas of the sub-continent. Later, 'one or more states' was replaced by the words 'single state' – terming the former as a printing error. As a result, the dream of the Muslims of this region for an independent country was nipped in the bud.

This region's Muslims thought that they would be able to live with freedom and honour in the state named Pakistan – built on the foundation of a common religious spirit. They therefore played a leading role in the Pakistan Movement. When the British rulers realized that they would not be able to keep the people of the subcontinent under their rule for a long time, they decided to partition the subcontinent based on the two-nation theory. On the basis of that, Pakistan became independent on 14 August, and India on 15 August 1947. The British applied their much debated 'divide and rule' policy while partitioning India. They partitioned India in such a way that peace could never be established in the subcontinent. Their objective has been fulfilled hundred percent. The people of Bangladesh joined the newly independent Pakistan founded on the two-nation theory. They thought that Bangla's citizens would be able to live with honour because of the religious unity and congruence; and the majority of Muslim peasant class would be freed from the exploitations perpetrated by money-lenders and landlords.

But it did not take much long for the people of Bangladesh to realize their mistake. Following the emergence of Pakistan, the first attack was on the mother-language of Bangla's people. The ruling clique of Pakistan declared that Urdu and only Urdu would be the lone state language. The people of Bangladesh started to make vociferous protests against this. Then a movement was started to elicit recognition for Bangla as the principal state language of Pakistan. At one stage in 1948, an agreement was reached with the Pakistani rulers on recognizing Bangla as Pakistan's principal state language.



But the Pakistani ruling clique ignored this agreement later on by declaring once again that Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan. In the process, the demand of 56% population of Pakistan was ignored. The people burst out in protests as a consequence. The students decided to gherao the parliament building while the parliament was in session on 21 February 1952. The Pakistani authorities clamped section-144 and forbade all kinds of movements-processions. But the students came down to the streets by ignoring that embargo. A number of protesters were then killed due to indiscriminate firing by the police. The language movement then spread all over Bangladesh and at one stage the Pakistani rulers were forced to accord recognition to Bangla as the principal state language. A language-based nationalism took root among the people of Bangladesh through the language movement. The people of Bangladesh realized that the state of Pakistan founded on religion-based nationalism was not safe for them. After that, all movements and struggles undertaken by the people of this territory during the Pakistani era were powered by the spirit of language-based nationalism.

It was true that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman provided leadership to the independence struggle of 1971, but the credit for achieving independence was not his alone. We have witnessed during the rule of previous Awami League government that attempts were made to give credit to a lone individual and a single family for independence by establishing it as their sole property. Not only that, we have also witnessed attempts to tarnish the image of valiant freedom-fighters of the liberation war in the name of giving imagined credit to a lone individual. Especially, many attempts were made to dilute the accomplishments of the declarer of independence Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman. President Zia was even termed an 'agent of Pakistan'. But Ziaur Rahman was awarded the 'Bir Uttam' title while Sheikh Mujib was the prime minister. One who tries to dishonour his adversaries cannot get honour when his turn comes.

Sheikh Mujib embraced arrest at the hands of the Pakistani invading forces on the night 25 March 1971. There is no such instance in the independence history of nations of the world where the top leader of independence movement gave himself up to the enemy instead of going to the battlefield. The whole nation was imbued with the spirit of independence, but became frustrated and bewildered when Sheikh Mujib allowed himself to be arrested by the Pakistani forces. They were not getting guidance on what they should do. At such a juncture, Major Ziaur Rahman declared the country's independence from the Kalurghat radio centre of Chattogram on 26 and 27 March, first in his own name and then on behalf of Sheikh Mujib. I joined Dhaka University a few years earlier as a teacher. The university classes were halted during the movement at that time. I then went to my own ancestral abode at Feni. There, I heard the declaration of independence by Zia over radio. I never knew Ziaur Rahman before. But I was immensely invigorated on hearing the declaration of independence in a Major's voice, and decided then and there to participate in the liberation war. I cannot describe my feeling when I heard the declaration of independence by Major Zia. Those who belittle this declaration should consider what would have happened if Bangladesh did not become independent and Major Zia was captured by the invaders? Zia would have been inevitably taken to a firing squad. Major Zia responded to the call of the motherland on that day despite the risk of certain death.

The Awami League and the Sheikh clan, however, claim sole credit for independence. Attempts were made during the previous Awami League rule to put Sheikh Mujib on the seat of a deity. The contribution of Sheikh Mujib in the independence movement can never be denied. But it is not fair to say that independence would not have been achieved without him. Just as independence is not achieved by a single person, similarly it does not wait for a lone individual. We must recognize the relevant people for their respective contributions in the realization of Bangladesh's independence. Mystery still shrouds the arrest of Sheikh Mujib by the Pakistani forces on the night of 25 March. However, although Sheikh Mujib was successful in movements, he was a huge failure as a ruler. It was during his rule that corruption spread throughout Bangladesh on a massive scale. At one juncture, he himself commented sorrowfully, "Everyone gets a goldmine, but I got a mine of thieves. I bring aid from abroad, but the suckers swallow it all". The biggest failure of the post-independence Awami League government was its inability to unite the nation. If the Awami League had formed a national government after independence instead of a party-government, scope would have been created for uniting the nation. But the nation got divided as that was not done. Indiscipline spread across the country. Some political parties including the JSD tried to bring changes to state-apparatus through armed means. As a result, an anarchic situation prevailed throughout the country. The country's economy was in tatters due to massive plundering by the party workers of AL. As a result, a famine hit the country in 1974. Some economists have proved later on through their research that although there was food deficit in the country at that time, it was not at such a level to cause a devastating famine. The horror of the famine exacerbated not because of food shortfall, but due to lack of proper distribution. The local-level activists of the Awami League resorted to massive plundering, and the food-crops were smuggled out of the country through secret routes.

The Awami League professes to be the upholder of the spirit of liberation war. But it was during AL rule that this spirit suffered maximum damage. The spirit of the liberation war in Bangladesh had two-fold components.

Firstly, forming a government based on electoral verdict of the masses; that is, ensuring participation of the people in running the statecraft. Secondly, ensuring the just distribution of state resources through removal of economic disparities. If state power was handed over to the Awami League as the majority party of 1970's election, then there would have been no need for the liberation war. The history of Pakistan might have been written differently if the Pakistani ruling clique had shown respect to the people's verdict. Similarly, the Awami League distributed a publicity paper titled 'Why is the Golden Bangla a Crematorium' during election campaign, which highlighted economic discriminations between the two parts of Pakistan. The ordinary people could learn about their economic deprivations through this. But looting started soon after the Awami League came to power. A segment of the population plundered state-wealth by using their political identity. The common people were neglected. According to the Gini's Coefficient numbers, the economic disparity between the wealthy and the poor in Bangladesh society during 1972-73 after independence was within tolerable limit. But this disparity rose to an unbearable level by 2022-23. According to the figures of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the share of top 10 percent population in national income was 28 percent of the total in 1973-74. But it rose to 41 percent in 2022-23. At the same time, the marginalised people almost became destitutes due to a fall in income.

The electoral system of Bangladesh was polluted for the first time during the first parliament election held in 1973. At that time, the election was made controversial through wielding of political influence, use of muscle power, and casting of false votes. This dismal trend could not be improved afterwards. None of the elections that were held in Bangladesh under political governments have been fair and credible. Only the elections held under non-party governments in 1991, 1996, 2001, 2008, and 2026 were accepted as free and fair at the national and international levels. It may be noted that no political party could win consecutive elections in polls held under non-party governments. That means, those who were in power could not meet the expectations of the people. The elections held under the Awami League regime in 2014, 2018, and 2024 were all farcical. They failed to get minimum acceptance at national and international levels. If the AL had not destroyed the parliamentary election system in this manner, then they might not have been ousted from power so tragically. It can comprehend now fully the consequences of usurping the rights of the people.

The vengeful treatment meted out to the BNP leader and three-times prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia during the previous Awami League rule was unprecedented in world history. The current prime minister Tarique Rahman was forced to live in exile in the United Kingdom for 17 years. Brutal tortures were also meted out to him. However, the more the AL-government perpetrated repression against Begum Khaleda Zia and her family, the more her popularity increased. This expression of love for Begum Khaleda Zia and her family by the common people of Bangladesh was witnessed during the 13<sup>th</sup> Jatiya Sangsad Election, when the masses voted spontaneously for the BNP candidates.

The students and people had descended on the streets to free themselves from Awami misrule that stretched over a long period. The sky and the surroundings shook due to their intense struggle. Finally, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had to leave her throne by resigning and fleeing from the country. Therefore, the 5<sup>th</sup> of August 2024 is a day written in golden letters in the political annals of Bangladesh. However, it cannot claim more prestige than the Independence Day or the liberation war of 1971. That is because, we fought against the Pakistani invading forces for the country's independence. On the other hand, we achieved victory against domestic autocracy by waging relentless movement during July-August 2024. Both the events were very important, but they are not rivals of one another.

The BNP-led alliance has formed a government after winning absolute majority in the 13<sup>th</sup> Jatiya Sangsad Election, which has been acclaimed both at national and international levels. The new government has been constituted in a differing context. The BNP-led alliance made a number of pledges during the election campaign. It is now time to implement those pledges. Since the assumption of office by the new government, the prime minister Tarique Rahman has been staging surprises one after another. During the inauguration of the Immortal Ekushey Book Fair of Bangla Academy, he mentioned about his initiative for creating a knowledge-based social milieu. At this juncture, it is very urgent to groom a knowledge-based society and illumined population.

The new government has started its journey amid various complex social cum economic challenges. These problems have been inherited by it. A conflict-ridden geo-political situation has compounded the challenges. High rates of inflation have



been prevailing in the domestic economy over the past four years. The measures taken by the interim government for containing high inflation has not proved to be effective. The lifestyle of the ordinary people has been jeopardised due to this high inflation. And just when the new government was contemplating measures and initiatives for controlling inflation, the US-Israeli war on Iran started. The inflation rate has already reached 9.13 percent. Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz to deter the movement of oil-carrying ships because of the war. Twenty percent of the oil transported globally every day passes through the Hormuz Strait. The international oil market has been adversely affected because of its closure. The price of oil has now crossed USD 100 from USD 65 a few days ago. If the war continues, then the oil price is likely to increase further within the next 3-4 months. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has advised everybody to save energy. At this critical juncture of the nation, all citizens should practice thrift while using fuel. I feel, we should strive to remain frugal in worldly matters at this difficult hour. There are many instances of worldly asceticism during crises periods in the history of mankind. Therefore, we should also be prepared to practice thrift. We are a nation of heroes. We are not afraid of anything. As an optimistic person, I believe that we and the global community shall be able to overcome the present crisis.

There is also apprehension that our manpower export, which is the second highest source of our foreign exchange earnings, may be severely harmed because of the war. Bangladesh's manpower exports are mainly directed towards 6 Muslim countries of the Middle-East. About 7 million Bangladeshis are at risk of losing their jobs because of the war.

The nation now faces numerous complex challenges. Just as we could emerge victorious by fighting unitedly against the Pakistani invading forces in 1971 by getting imbued with the spirit of liberation war, we shall similarly act unitedly for tackling these crises. A united Bangladesh has never been defeated. Let the pledge of this year's Independence Day be unity for conquering the crises. □

(The writer is ex-Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University and former Ambassador of Bangladesh to Bahrain.)

Translation: Dr Helal Uddin Ahmed

## We Recall the Martyrs with Reverence

has become tangled to a vicious cycle.

Sub-standard education system can only produce low-quality graduates. Now the question is, how can we overcome this situation? One option is to prepare high-quality materials in accordance with syllabuses and curricula and then publicise those across the country through radio and television. Teachers of good quality can be used for this purpose. The present government has declared that the expenditure for education sector would be raised to 5 percent of GDP gradually. But there is no reason to believe that our education system would automatically become advanced if this amount of money is spent for the sector. The quality of education can increase gradually through training of teachers and dedicated channels in radio and television broadcasting good quality study materials. Besides, good results can be obtained by encouraging good teachers through awarding them prizes and highlighting their profile at the national level through the mass media. However, political commitment is needed most for this. That commitment has to be neutral – free from party-affiliation, opinion, or groupings.

We very much lag behind in the fields of science and technology. Generation and advancement of new knowledge would be facilitated if research opportunities are created for scientists and researchers. We should remember that it is not enough to enhance expenditure in the education sector. Side by side, we need to determine which areas should get priority. That is, we need to ascertain what should be the relative allocations for primary, secondary, and higher education sub-sectors? How much allocations should there be for teachers' development, high-quality text-books, scientific and technological education? Everything will have to be determined with the objective of eliciting maximum benefit.

The culture of Bangladesh is a rich one. It is without parallel in terms of diversity, width, depth, and humanism. Our culture has taught us over the ages to fight against foreign



domination and colonialism. Judging from that context, we can understand that our cultural opulence has made us a self-respecting nation. But we should remember that just as culture can be a tool for attaining self-respect, similarly it can be a weapon for losing honour. Because of the intensification of foreign cultural influence in post-independence Bangladesh, our cultural practice has become one-sided. Culture becomes enriched through exchanges – not through blind loyalty. For this reason, our art, literature, music, dance, fine art and crafts should be nurtured in such a way that they depict our self-respect and identity. We should remember that just as proper cultural supplements in our working lives enhance the quality of work, similarly they make the workers enterprising and creative.

Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman established the Shilpakala Academy and the Shishu Academy for enriching the cultural practices at the national level and to make them life-oriented and aligned to national prestige. But these institutions have lost their distinctiveness due to adversarial ideologies. Side by side with socioeconomic pursuits for building the country, our pledge this Independence and National Day should be to launch a cultural movement that would make us aware about our self-identity. Our identity is reposed in our language, religion, geography, and natural environment. Our cultural ethos should be framed in conformity with these attributes. Therefore, let us declare our resolve to build a rainbow nation. We shall have to create a cultural environment irrespective of class, profession, religion, colour, caste and ethnicity of people living in our motherland that it strengthens our bonds of brotherhood and self-identity. We shall have to utilise our cultural resources so that we can become resolute and invincible as a nation. For profiting spiritually, we should be able to see ourselves and mankind in the light of gems that embody our culture.

We need to search our soul during this 56th Independence and National Day. On the one hand, we should pass on the knowledge about what we could do; on the other hand, we should become aware about what we could not do. The nation can be freed from the sorrows and miseries of the past if this dialectic relationship can be handled properly. July-2024 was an unforgettable episode in our national history. On the one hand, the memories of the martyrs of 1971 should be kept in our hearts; at the same time, we should keep alive deep inside the memories of the July-martyrs who gave up their lives for overthrowing fascism. We should never deviate from showing respect to the sacrifices of lakhs of martyrs in our struggles for democracy and freedom. Our pledge on the occasion of Independence and National Day should be to remain reverentially faithful to the supreme sacrifices and ideals of the martyrs. □

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