

Long Live Bangladesh

Long Live Bangabandhu



***National Mourning Day, 2021:***  
**Academic Tributes to the Father of the Nation**

Remembering . . .  
**15th August,**  
**1975**  
. . . our **Darkest** chapter



IUB  
Independent University,  
Bangladesh



**A SILENT, PROFOUND TRIBUTE TO  
THE FATHER OF THE NATION  
BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN  
& HIS FAMILY MEMBERS . . .**

# **Victims of 15th August 1975 massacre**

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**Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman**

**Begum Fazilatunnesa Mujib**

**Sheikh Kamal**

**Sultana Kamal Khuki**

**Sheikh Jamal**

**Parveen Jamal Rosy**

**Sheikh Russell**

**Sheikh Abu Naser**

**Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni**

**Begum Arju Moni**

**Abdur Rab Serniabat**

**Baby Serniabat**

**Arif Serniabat**

**Sukanto Abdullah Basu**

**Shahid Serniabat**

**Abdul Nayeem Khan Rintu**

**Colonel Jamil Uddin Ahmed**

**SB Officer Siddikur Rahman**

**15th August**



**Mr. M.A. Mohaimen**



**Mr. A.K. Ashrafuddin Ahmed**



**Mr. Anjan Chowdhury**



**Ambassador M.M. Rezaul Karim**

**LIBERATORS . . .**  
(. . . because one-quarter  
of all Founding IUB Trustees engaged  
in the 1971 War) . . . .



**Mr. A. Matin Chowdhury**

**Among them . . . .**



**Mr. Jaglul Karim**



**Mr. A. Rab Chowdhury**



**Mr. Didar A. Hussain**



**Dr. M. Tajul Hossain, F.R.C.S.**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
1. Itinerary of the IUB webinar on National Mourning Day, 2021	4
2. Message from Chairman, Board of Trustees (BoT), IUB <i>Mr. A. Matin Chowdhury</i>	5
3. Message from Pro-Vice Chancellor & Vice Chancellor (Acting), IUB <i>Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan</i>	6
4. "15 AUGUST '75: A NIGHT OF FEAR . . . UNCERTAINTY . . . AGONY . . ." <i>Professor Nasreen Ahmad</i>	7-9
5. "OUR NATIONAL MOURNING DAY, THE FIFTEENTH AUGUST" <i>Ambassador (Rtd.) Muhammad Zamir</i>	10-13
6. "BANGABANDHU: THIS NAME IS ETERNAL" <i>Professor Atiur Rahman</i>	14-19
7. "REMEMBERING BANGABANDHU'S VISION & EXPECTATIONS FOR BANGLADESH," AUGUST 15, 2021 <i>Professor Fakrul Alam</i>	20-23
8. "BANGABANDHU IN CLASSROOM: EXPERIENCES FROM 'BANGLADESH 1971' COURSE, IUB, 2014-2021" <i>Professor Zakir Hossain Raju</i>	24-26
9. "ARTISTIC OR INSTINCTIVE? EXPLORING THE MUJIB MAGIC" <i>Professor Imtiaz A. Hussain</i>	27-31
10. IUB's "SHOK DIBOSH": A SUMMATION <i>Professor Taiabur Rahman</i>	32
11. Bangabandhu's Chronology	33-40
12. Homage to the Father of the Nation by IUB Students' Clubs	41-42



**August**



**Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) Webinar on  
*National Mourning Day, 2021:*  
**Academic Tributes to the Father of the Nation****

Date: August 14, 2021

Please join us at <https://www.facebook.com/iub.edu/live/>

04:15 - 04:25 pm

**Welcome remarks:**

**Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan**

*Pro-Vice Chancellor & Vice Chancellor (Acting), Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB)*

04:25 - 04:35 pm

**Academic Discussants:**

**Professor Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman**

*Department of English & Modern Languages, SLASS, IUB*

04:35 - 04:45 pm

**Professor Imtiaz A. Hussain**

*Head, Global Studies & Governance (GSG) Program, SLASS, IUB*

04:45 - 04:55 pm

**IUB Parent Representative**

**Mr. Anwar Chowdhury**

*Additional Secretary & Director General, BITAC, Ministry of Industries*

04:55 - 05:05 pm

**Academic Guests of Honor**

**Professor Fakrul Alam**

*Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Research Institute for Peace and Liberty*

05:05 - 05:15 pm

**Professor Atiur Rahman**

*Bangabandhu Chair, University of Dhaka; Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank*

05:15 - 05:25 pm

**Professor Nasreen Ahmad**

*Former Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Dhaka*

05:25 - 05:35 pm

**Ambassador (Rtd.) Muhammad Zamir**

*Former Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

**05:35 - 06:00 pm**

**Keystone Session**

**Chief Guest**

**Mr. Farhad Hossain, M.P.**

*Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Public Administration, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*

**Session Chair**

**Mr. A. Matin Chowdhury**

*Chairman, Board of Trustees (BoT), IUB*

06:00 - 06:10 pm

**Vote of Thanks**

**Professor Taiabur Rahman**

*Dean, School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (SLASS), IUB*

**Moderator**

**Professor Zakir Hossain Raju**

*Head, Department of Media and Communication, SLASS, IUB*

**15th August**



## Message



### **Mr. A. Matin Chowdhury**

*Honorable Chairman, Board of Trustees, Independent University, Bangladesh*

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) and the Office of the Chairman, Board of Trustees, are pleased to host the Webinar commemorating the 'National Mourning Day 2021', and launch the official brochure reflecting on various aspects of the life and work of our the 'Father of the Nation' - *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

As a premier tertiary educational institution of the country, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) has made a conscious effort to promote the spirit and philosophy of our War of Independence as spearheaded by the *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

It may be noted that a large proportion of the Founding Members of the Board of Trustees of IUB were involved in the War of Independence in various capacities including frontline fighters (5 on the battlefield, others elsewhere, including the country's first Health Secretary).

I am happy to learn that a major book project portraying the life and work of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Bangladesh's development portfolio is currently in progress under the leadership of the Global Studies and Governance (GSG) programme in association with the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (SLASS). This Brochure represents an initial output of the larger research initiative, which has pulled together some leading personalities on the subject. I strongly believe that this work by selected authors, who have proven expertise on researching about the philosophies and practices of *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, will be a valuable contribution.

15th August



## Message



### Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan

*Pro-Vice Chancellor & Vice Chancellor (Acting), Independent University, Bangladesh*

Education lost a Champion on August 15, 1975. *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's full-fledged commitment to lifting fellow Bangalees from oppression was necessary for the 1947 partition of India, and even more fervently for the 1971 freedom war that delivered the land of Bangalees to its rightful heirs. Yet these deeply-rooted origins of *Bangabandhu*'s keen interest and contribution to education was largely concealed by oppressors and their allies.

Even as a teenager, he successfully invited a stalwart of Indian politics, Huseyn Shahid Suhrawardy, to his Faridpur village, not so much as a personal house guest but as a guest of Gopalganj Mission School, where *Bangabandhu* would eventually graduate from. Ten years later, he joined others to establish a student led organization, which still stands today as the *Chaatra League*. In the same year of 1948, he pioneered the movement to prevent another language being imposed upon Bangalees. In fact, our Father of the Nation altered the legacy of another Father of the Nation, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, by stopping Urdu from becoming the official language of the nation. The rest we know all too well: the Language Movement followed by a bloody war for freedom culminated into an independent Bangladesh in 1971. What has gotten less attention is how this shift to Bangla also altered the structure of our education, from text-books school-children read to the cultivation of literature in the upper echelons of intellectuals and academics. By crusading for Bangla and fostering student organizations, *Bangabandhu* built the very pillars of the education that is being imparted to swathes of students even after 46 years of his untimely departure.

On August 15, 1975, education lost a silent but sturdy Champion. That is why we resolve on every National Mourning Day to strengthen his vision: to enhance education in every form, at every level, and for everyone. It is the non-compromising mission of Independent University, Bangladesh, to push education forward to greater heights and pray for one of its greatest Champion's eternal peace.

**15th August**



**15 August '75:  
A Night of Fear ...  
... Uncertainty ...  
Agony .....**



**Professor Nasreen Ahmad**

*Former Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Dhaka*

We woke up with the noise of multiple gunshots very early in the morning of 15 August. It was raining bullets and felt as if the bullets would pierce the concrete walls and hit us; we crawled out of our beds and took shelter in the attached washroom. We had no inkling of why and what was going on outside and all we heard were gun shots and twice heavy-mortar shelling. At first we thought that *Bangabandhu's* house was attacked by miscreants, and forces at his place, who were there for his protection, were retaliating them. But then a telephone call from a relative of ours informed us about Sheikh Moni being gunned down. It made us think otherwise. Our house that day was quite full of people with all of us siblings and others including an aunt, cousins, my only little son and house helps. To save ourselves from bullets that were being fired incessantly, we all took shelter in the two bathrooms upstairs of our two storied house.

We still had no idea about what was happening outside at *Bangabandhu's* home or even down the street. My brother managed to sneak through the windows and saw groups of men dressed in black, all armed, and all within our compound; their guns pointed in the direction of Mirpur road. Watching those people holding guns gave us the impression that they were there to guard or protect *Bangabandhu* from outside attacks. However, we came to believe gradually that our lives were also in danger and we might not survive the night even when we had managed to survive another dark night of 26 March, four years before. Neither my husband, Imran Ahmad, nor my father Nuruddin Ahmad, was

15th August



home that night. Those few hours of our lives were filled with anxiety, confusion, fear of death, uncertainty about the future. As bullets went flying and deafening sounds of mortar engulfed us, all I could do was to think of our impending death and the thereafter. I thought of my husband and my father—would they find us lying in a pool of blood here in the washroom or would we all be dumped in some unknown place they would never be able to find?

As the shooting and shelling stopped, there was an eerie silence. At that very moment someone started banging hard on the kitchen door downstairs, which was just underneath the bathroom we were in. A harsh voice ordered us to open the door at once, a second voice threatened again to open up; otherwise, they would start firing they said. We were so scared that we did not know what to do, but after hearing of firing, we gathered our courage, and calling everyone from the two bathrooms, we came down the stairs and opened the kitchen door. We were met with a ferocious-looking dark-skinned man dressed in black. He yelled his question of why we were not opening up and then ordered us to line-up outside. This instruction of lining up outside the house was terrifying. It reminded us of our 1971 Liberation War, when Pakistani soldiers lined up innocent Bangalees only to brush-fire them down.

We lined up as ordered, and they walked us to our outhouse behind, and made us sit down on the dust coated floor. There were two sentry guarding us, and they stood at either corners of the veranda we were in. From here we saw all that was going on outside. Our compound was full of black uniformed men, many armed and all were going over and coming back from *Bangabandhu's* place. *Bangabandhu's* house was clearly visible from where we were sitting, looked unscathed from outside. I wondered about the bullets, who were they aimed at; and the mortars, where did they land?

We were still in the dark and did not have the foggiest idea of what had happened till the sentries guarding us started talking. From their talks we could make out something terrible had happened but still had no clue about the gruesome deaths in *Bangabandhu's* house just next door.

Soon after as we sat startled and scared in the outhouse, from *Bangabandhu's* house came a fearful female voice in a mournful wail. The long wail pitched higher and higher and then two loud gun shots resounded. The wail stopped immediately and again an uneasy silence all around till the inquisitive sentries went on asking us if we knew Sheikh Kamal, if he was home yesterday. They asked us if we had seen Sheikh Kamal's wife, who they heard was beautiful.

15th August



They wanted to know about our whereabouts during the war in 1971 and spat out their disgust at people who had gone to India and partook their meals/*bhaat* there.

As we sat staring out at the abnormal 15th morning of August, 1975 only once I saw a tank roll by making a clanking noise on Road No.32. A fresh lot of black uniformed men rushed in from the road, some wanted to know the direction of stairs to our roof and ran inside while others stationed themselves outside, all over ours and *Bangabandhu's* house. At one point of time an officer accompanied with few others came to where we sat lined up and asked if we had any arms and ammunition. They had information they said, but we had none except my father's 303 rifle. To check the truth, he took my brother Nawaz inside the house to show him the gun and its license—the only piece of weapon at home.

Time stood still, but I remember the sky getting clearer and the day brighten when in walked from *Bangabandhu's* house a hot-tempered officer of the army. Surprisingly I do not remember the colour of his uniform but remember him carrying a sten-gun and a pistol hanging on his holster. He was Major Huda who came from my home district, Kushtia, and who knew one of my cousins, Aminul Huq Badsha, who was sitting along with us. Huda apparently knew who the house belonged to, my mother a minister in *Bangabandhu's* cabinet had passed away a year before and he came to see who the occupants were now. He asked Badsha Bhai's name, said he knew him and acted as if nothing had happened and apologized for making us sit outside all this time. With a flourish he waved us inside and asked us to “be normal”!

It was just 11:00 in the morning when we went inside the house which looked dark and gloomy. Doors and windows shut the night before were still closed, two armed sentries took positions up on the roof, and we sat like zombies the whole day in the narrow corridor upstairs. We still had no real picture of what had happened all this time. But then we got a call from *Bangabhabon*, asking for Nuruddin Shaheb, who, just the day before, had left for an official tour to China—a country that had till then not recognized Bangladesh. The caller then asked about our welfare as the President wanted to know. Told him we were all good and very nervously asked who the new President was. Hearing the new president's name I knew we were out of danger for the time being as we belonged to the same party but my father would have to pay because of his whole hearted support and allegiance to *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, always.

**15th August**



## **Our National Mourning Day, The Fifteenth August**



### **Ambassador (Rtd.) Muhammad Zamir**

*Former Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

This day marks the 46<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation and many members of his immediate family. On this day of this tragic month we need to acknowledge once again the historic role he played as the master helmsman in the creation of an independent Bangladesh. We also need to remember how he subsequently safely guided our ship through troubled waters amidst a devastated post war scenario.

No allusion to Bangabandhu, our charismatic leader, will be complete without referring to his vision as outlined in his remarks at Palam Airport, New Delhi on 10 January, 1972. He described his journey to a free Bangladesh as “a journey from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from desolation to hope”. He also reiterated that he was going back to his independent country “not with hatred in my heart for anyone, but with the satisfaction that truth has at last triumphed over falsehood, sanity over insanity, courage over cowardice, justice over injustice and good over ill.”

We must not forget in this context the efforts undertaken by him in successfully providing relief and rehabilitation to more than ten million displaced persons and in measures taken to restore order and stability within a war-ravaged economy. This effort and approach on his part was consistent with the courage and determination that Bangabandhu had demonstrated in the political arena between 1948 and 1971. He had welcomed incarceration on several occasions, stuck to his task and his conviction and disagreed to compromises and half-way solutions. This transformed him into the symbol of freedom and independence.

**15th August**



Bangabandhu's magnanimity and belief in the people of Bangladesh was reflected in his optimism. It was also this spirit that would inspire him to face up to the many difficulties that he would have to overcome in the coming months.

A statesman and gifted orator, Bangabandhu's speech on 10th January, 1972 at Suhrawardy Uddyan was masterly in his advice for the victorious people of Bangladesh. At this first opportunity, he warned that none should 'raise' their 'hands to strike against non-Bangalees'. At the same time, he displayed his concern for the safety of the 'four hundred thousand Bangalees stranded in Pakistan'.

While re-affirming that he harbored no 'ill-will' for the Pakistanis, he also pointed out that "those who have unjustly killed our people and assisted in this crime will surely be tried." Consequently, it is a matter of satisfaction that the present government has been able to activate the required war crimes trial for criminal acts perpetrated against humanity. We owe it to the millions who lost family members and the tens of thousands of women who were molested.

In another significant assertion in the same speech, he pointed out (to counter false and contentious Pakistani propaganda) that "Bangladesh is the second largest Muslim state in the world only next to Indonesia". He also drew their attention to the fact that "in the name of Islam, the Pakistani army had killed Muslims and members of the minority community and dishonored women." He also strongly admonished Tenku Abdur Rahman, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference Secretariat in a message sent on 10th February, 1972 for not doing anything "during the nine months of 1971 when three million innocent Bengalis were killed in cold blood by the West Pakistani forces."

The August *putsch* was carried out by certain sections of the armed forces and a group of disgruntled politicians. They roamed the streets of Dhaka and swept aside innocence, their eyes showing as much charity as glass. The voice of liberty was snuffed out by the very men trained to save, rather than maim.

Murder was bad enough but what followed was even worse. On September 26, 1975 through an Extraordinary Bangladesh Gazette Notification, the usurper President Khandker Moshtaque Ahmed and his compliant Secretary of the Ministry of Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Justice informed the nation that under "The Indemnity Ordinance, 1975 (Ordinance No. XIX)" restrictions had been put in place with regard to 'taking any legal or other proceedings in respect of certain acts or things done in connection with, or in preparation or execution of any plan for, or steps necessitating the historical change and the proclamation of Martial Law on the morning of the 15th August, 1975'. What an abuse of the English language!

15th August



The consequence of such lack of accountability was only natural. Murderers did not hesitate to commit another crime. That is exactly what happened on 3 November, 1975. Four prominent leaders of the *Awami League*, formerly Ministers, including the Acting President and the Prime Minister during our War of Liberation were brutally killed within the Dhaka Central Jail. A three member Judicial Commission, as expected, was immediately constituted to investigate the matter, but that was the end of that story. Nothing happened.

Leaders of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), however, forgot that what goes around usually comes around. Their espousal of lack of accountability for murder of innocent people came back to haunt the *BNP* through the assassination of President Ziaur Rahman in May 1981.

Subsequently, it took 21 years before the crime committed on 15 August could be addressed. The *Awami League* government sworn into Office in 1996 took two important steps—the overturning of the iniquitous Indemnity provision and the initiation of a normal judicial process (not through a Special Tribunal) for trying those guilty of the crimes committed on 15 August. This measure commendably reiterated the belief of the aggrieved victims in the fairness of our Judiciary. The government also declared that day as the National Mourning Day and a public holiday.

Unfortunately, the new *BNP Alliance* government (elected to office in 2001) cast basic civility out of the window and on 28 July 2002 cancelled the observance of the National Mourning Day. This was politics of hatred at its worst. The judicial process pertaining to the alleged killers of Bangabandhu was also more or less suspended through machinations between the politicized Judiciary and the government in power. It was amazing to see how the virus of 'embarrassment' spread within the echelons of the judicial hierarchy. Fortunately for the people, due process of law and the principles of natural justice were upheld on July 27, 2008 when the High Court declared illegal the cancellation of this significant Mourning Day. I believe that the observance of this day as the National Mourning Day has reaffirmed the establishment of the rule of law.

Since then the country has witnessed the completion of the trial and the execution of the judgment pertaining to some of those who were directly involved in the murders that took place on 15th August. There are still some others who were involved in the killing. One can only hope that this cycle is eventually completed.

15th August



He believed in nationalism, democracy, secularism and socialism. He felt that they were required for the good of the common man. Bangabandhu was also a firm believer in the rich cultural and literary heritage of Bangladesh and for him that was the spring-board of the Bangalee ethos, its tradition and its nationalism. That instilled in him the pride of being a Bangalee living in *Shonar Bangla*. His was a life of sacrifice. It is such a pity that his efforts were snuffed out at such a relatively young age.

Before concluding I will also refer to a poem which I wrote to commemorate this day:-

*Fifteenth August*  
*Seeking the easy companionship of hypocrisy and hate,*  
*in one hour, that night,*  
*when justice slept and so did the saints,*  
*butchers roamed the streets of Dhaka.*  
*They swept aside innocence,*  
*their eyes showing as much charity as glass.*  
*Their assault was brief,*  
*their savagery laying waste to trust.*  
*They faced no obstacle in their mind*  
*to the fact that they killed their own kind.*  
*The voice of liberty was snuffed out*  
*by the very men trained to save, rather than maim. ....*

15th August



## Bangabandhu: 'This Name is Eternal'



**Professor Atiur Rahman**  
*Bangabandhu Chair, University of Dhaka*  
*Former Governor, Bangladesh Bank*

### Introduction: The Namesake of Bangladesh

*Bangabandhu* and Bangladesh are just inseparable. He is our destiny. He steadfastly navigated our past struggles, defied all challenges, and shaped our aspirations of liberation. And even today, he remains our point of reference, our lighthouse. His thoughts will guide our younger generation in the future journey of our national development. Given his paramount presence in our past, present, and future, I strongly feel that our younger generation ought to know more about him and his contribution towards creating a nation. For that matter we the researchers and academia have a bigger role to play in presenting him to the youth in the right perspective. This is necessary as history was once deliberately distorted following his killing. Certainly, the heart of Bangladesh was pierced by bullets on that fateful night. And then those traitors who were involved in this heinous crime against humanity started telling the people that *Bangabandhu* was nobody. In response, poet Mahadev Saha wrote:

"They say you are nobody, but the two hundred and fifty rivers of Bangladesh say,  
You are this Bengal's rivers, Bengal's green fields  
You are the song of this Charyapada, you are the Bangla alphabet  
They say you are nobody, but upon hearing your footsteps  
The hilsas of Padma start dancing;  
They say you are nobody, but Rabindranath's songs  
And Nazrul's 'Rebel' poem say,  
You are the heart of Bangladesh."  
(Mahadev Saha, 'This name is eternal'). (Translation mine)

His name can never be erased when he is the all-encompassing namesake of Bangladesh. It is heartening to note that we have been able to transform our grief into defiance.

15th August



And we have made him our constant companion as we move on to achieve higher goals of inclusive development in alignment with his dream. Not surprisingly, 74% of our youths can immediately relate *Bangabandhu* with his historic speech of 7th March 1971 (source: *Online Survey on 800 plus youths by Unnayan Shamannay, 2020*). Another 65% think about the word independence as soon as his name is pronounced. And 72% percent of the respondents believe that his selflessness won everyone's hearts as he deeply cared for people from all walks of life. That is why Professor James Manor said that he stood out among many other leaders who were also fathers of their nation (source: "Understanding Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman", a speech given at SOAS, University of London on 10 April 2018). He elevated *Bangabandhu* to this position primarily for three reasons: his secular views, exceptional organization-building capability, and flexibility in negotiation.

### Destined to Be a People's Protagonist

He was very close to the grassroots even as a schoolboy. A born organizer, young Mujib put his full energy into the betterment of the disadvantaged. Mujib led the volunteer brigade and welcomed H.S. Suhrawardy to the Mission school in Gopalganj in late 1930s. Mr. Suhrawardy was impressed by his leadership quality and began to exchange letters with him later (*The Unfinished Memoirs*, p.10). This can be considered the first stepping-stone of Mujib's political career. And the rest is history.

He passed his entrance exam in 1942 and enrolled in *Islamia College* in the same year. He lived in the Baker Hostel, which also became his major center of student politics under the guidance of both Suhrawardy and Abul Hashim. He was involved in the Pakistan movement, hoping like his mentors that the North-Eastern part of India would have a separate Muslim-majority state. But this ultimately did not happen.

In 1948, Sheikh Mujib joined the law department of the *University of Dhaka* as a graduate student. During this time, he made significant contributions to the initiation of the language movement, *Dawwal* movement (the movement against cordon policy of the government for restricting movement of food, with huge implication for the seasonal farm laborers) and the movement of class 4 employees of *Dhaka University*. Sheikh Mujib was expelled from the university as he refused to plead guilty for supporting the low-paid employees. By this time Mujib was arrested a few times. After his expulsion, Mujib decided to devote himself fully to mainstream politics. He wrote, "I was still angry with the Muslim League leaders. What they were doing with Pakistan was contrary to the Pakistan I had dreamt of. ... Ordinary people depended on us and would direct their questions at us. The country had become independent: why wasn't anything being done to alleviate their sufferings?" (*The Unfinished Memoirs*, p.134).

15th August



The *Awami Muslim League* was formed in 1949, with Mujib as the joint secretary while still in jail. This was not surprising given his relentless efforts in laying the building blocks for this party. He had to remain in jail for more than two years during this spell of detention. An arrest warrant was issued against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on 30th December 1949, and on 31st December he was arrested from a house in Lalbag of Old Dhaka (*Secret Documents Of Intelligence Branch On Father Of The Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman*, edited by Sheikh Hasina, Hakkani publishers, Volume-1, page, 326). He was under an intelligence scanner right from his arrival to East Bengal from Kolkata. He guided the student leaders to organize the 1952 Language Movement while he was confined in *Dhaka Medical College Hospital* as a detainee. He was sent to Faridpur jail because of his underground connection with the language movement activists. This, however, could not stop his activism. He started a hunger strike to popularize the cause for the language movement. Then came the carnage of 21st February, when several students and other activists were martyred by police firing. The whole province protested this killing and Mujib was finally released on 27th February when his physical condition deteriorated significantly. He started reorganizing *Awami Muslim League* after a brief period of recovery. He then went to Karachi to see his mentor Suhrawardy and the Prime Minister Khawaja Nazimuddin, to press his demands for realizing the goals of the Language Movement, achieving democratic space for his party, and ending the oppression of the people. He was only 32 at that time. Yet his political gestures were thoughtful and far-sighted. This characteristic of his leadership was also visible when he visited the newly liberated China in the same year. He was at the time neither a Member of the Parliament nor a Minister. Indeed, his approaches were always statesman-like. He visited agricultural farms, industrial factories, workers' homes, and educational institutions to learn how reforms were made by the new leadership that brought unprecedented socio-economic transformations to China. He took notes of what he saw and apparently made good use of them when he started rebuilding the newly liberated Bangladesh.

### **A Statesman in the Making**

Sheikh Mujib was an exceptional political organizer. His active role as the Secretary of *Awami Muslim League* in forming the United Front and winning the Provincial Assembly overwhelmingly reflected his skills and capabilities as a people-friendly politician. Just to illustrate this quality of his leadership, let me share with the readers an interesting episode. During his campaign Sheikh Mujib came across an old lady who invited him to her hut and offered him a bowl of milk, a betel leaf, and some coins. He was very touched by her gesture but returned the coins along with some more money after drinking the milk. The old lady did not take the money and told him that "the prayers of the poor will be with him". Sheikh Mujib

15th August



wrote, "When I left her hut my eyes were moist with tears. On that day, I promised myself that I would do nothing to betray my people" (*The Unfinished Memoirs*, page-260). Sheikh Mujib became the Minister of the Cooperatives and Agricultural department and took oath on 15th May. However, he served for only around a fortnight as Minister since the provincial government was dismissed by the central government on flimsy grounds. Moreover, he was the only Minister who was put in jail.

A new Constituent Assembly was formed in 1955 and he was elected as a member. On 17th June 1955 *Awami League* demanded the autonomy of East Pakistan. As proposed by him, the word 'Muslim' was dropped from the party name on 21st October reflecting Sheikh Mujib's principle of secularism. He had witnessed many communal riots and therefore wanted people of all beliefs to live in peace. Sheikh Mujib became the minister of industries, trade, labor, anti-corruption, and village aid in A. T. Khan's cabinet in 1956. He made many contributions from his positions as a minister and as the chairman of the Tea Board. However, he resigned from his minister post when Maulana Bhashani questioned Mujib's position as both a minister and the General Secretary of *Awami League* and asked him to choose one. He invariably chose the latter as he was more focused on building organization.

Following the imposition of Martial Law, Sheikh Mujib was arrested on 12th October 1958 and released after more than a year on 17th December 1959. Ayub was then in power in Pakistan. Sheikh Mujib was under strict surveillance even after his release. In March 1964, the party was formally revived with him as the Secretary. In June they declared their manifesto, which included measures against the economic disparity between the two regions. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proposed six points for the emancipation of the disadvantaged people of East Pakistan on 5th February 1966. He traveled around the country to popularize the six-points program which was overwhelmingly supported by the people. However, the government was dead against this program and consequently Mujib was put behind bars many times. There was a general strike on June 7, 1966, in support of the Six-Points Program which caused several casualties. *Bangabandhu* was deeply pained by the loss of lives and massive arrest of party activists. He became more optimistic about the outcome of his struggle for regional autonomy following the people's overwhelming support for it. He was technically released from the central jail only to be arrested again under the so-called Agartala Conspiracy case in 1968. He was detained in the cantonment and tried in a military court for 'sedition against the state'. There was a mass upsurge primarily organized by the students, which led to his release and contributed to the subsequent fall of Ayub regime. Following his release, he was given the title of *Bangabandhu*, the friend of Bengal, by student leaders led by DUCSU (Dhaka University Central Students Union Vice President Tofael Ahmed). General Yahya Khan later took power and arranged a general election in 1970, which proved to be a comprehensive mandate for the six-points program led by *Bangabandhu*.

**15th August**



## **Towards Independence of Bangladesh**

*Awami League* had won 167 out of 169 National Assembly seats, and 288 out of 300 Provincial Assembly seats were won by East Pakistanis. In 1971, when the Yahya government backed out from handing over power to the elected representatives, *Bangabandhu* launched the hugely successful non-cooperation movement. On 7th March *Bangabandhu* delivered his historic speech, which reflected the aspirations that the Bangalees had for generations. *Bangabandhu* formally issued the declaration of independence of Bangladesh at 12:20am on 26th March, following the initiation of genocide in the evening of 25th March by the Pakistan army. He was arrested from his residence soon afterwards and he spent his days in prison expecting his death. The whole nation participated in a war of liberation for nine months. The youths volunteered to become freedom fighters and didn't hesitate to bleed for the liberation of Bangladesh. *Bangabandhu's* ideals and determination helped his co-leaders coordinate this war, which was finally supported by the Alliance forces from India. Together they defeated the Pakistani occupying forces and ensured victory for Bangladesh. However, independence was incomplete in the absence of *Bangabandhu*, who was imprisoned in Pakistan. Thanks to the support of global leaders and committed diplomacy of the then Indian Premier Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Pakistani leadership had to finally set *Bangabandhu* free.

## **Bangabandhu, An architect of Inclusive Bangladesh**

*Bangabandhu* returned to Bangladesh on 10th January 1972. He took control of the war-devastated country and began to rebuild it right away. His speedy moves on reconstruction of the war-torn infrastructure, rehabilitation of ten million refugees, reconstruction of more than two million houses for those who were internally displaced, rehauling the regulatory institutions including the central bank, upgrading a provincial government into a central government, creation of a planning commission to initiate First Five Year Plan, and mobilizing food aid in the face of persistent natural calamities and adverse geopolitical climate provided great hope for a struggling nation to move forward despite many challenges. The constitution and the First Five Year Plan were already in action within a year of liberation. The four principles of the constitution reflected what *Bangabandhu*, and the Bangalees had spent years struggling for: Nationalism, Socialism, Democracy, and Secularism. Taking the reins of a war-torn country was not an easy task. Braving these challenges, he helped rehabilitate millions of refugees and thousands of wounded war veterans including war heroines, rebuild communication system and other physical and social infrastructures, gain recognition by hundreds of countries, design a non-aligned independent foreign policy, and pursue farsighted inclusive development policies. One must also remember that he started this development journey with virtually no resource in hand.

**15th August**



The foreign exchange reserve was just zero, the size of the economy was about eight billion US Dollars, savings to GDP was 3% and that of investment 9%. Yet, he started walking on two legs, emphasizing both agriculture and industrialization. The latter was state led with prudent policies that provided ample scope for the private sector to play its role. He also gave an opportunity for the cooperative sector to flourish. He also initiated an Education Commission to produce forward-looking skilled human resources. The economy started responding positively, demonstrating its resilience. The per capita income went up to 273 USD in 1975 from just 93 USD in 1972. However, due to sudden rise in oil price and shortfall in domestic food production, the level of inflation skyrocketed. But he tried hard to take appropriate monetary policy measures and improve local food production to bring down prices of food and other daily necessities. He established a rationing system along with trade corporation of Bangladesh to rein in inflation. His measures were yielding results and inflation started calming down. But he was totally upset with the corruption prevailing in the administration and the society. As a response, he introduced the Second Revolution to bring systemic changes and decentralization of the administration. However, it required time to fix all this. So, *Bangbandhu* asked for more time again and again. When speaking on the Second Revolution, *Bangabandhu* had said, "Give me three years, if Allah keeps me alive, I will come back to parliamentary democracy. I was unable to do much during the last three years because of domestic and international disasters. This saddens me a lot." (*Syeduzzaman, M, Bangabandhu Smriti O Unnayan Darshan, Uttaran, December 2020, p.49*). On 15th August 1975 we lost our hope and our leader, and the country became rudderless for years until his able daughter took charge of the party and later the government.

### **Conclusion: Saga of a Compassionate Leader**

One thing that remained constant through all the years was his devotion towards his people. He never lost touch with them. Indeed, he was an aesthetic leader who was always compassionate to his people. Even his worst enemy will have to agree that he was the embodiment of Bangladesh. As he himself said, he was not an angel. There must have been many limitations in his leadership style. However, on balance the successes overwhelmed his failures. His own narrative of the journey he pursued is so fascinating that one can hardly match it. Yet, as a mark of respect to the greatest son of our country we revisited his journey in a modest way in the above paper, to orient the youths about the Himalayan proportions of his contributions in building this nation of ours from scratch. One cannot learn about Bangladesh without first learning about *Bangabandhu's* life in its entirety. Such was his organic relationship with this country and its people. And he will continue to provide the nation the aspiration to build a prosperous Bangladesh, his favorite 'Sonar Bangla'. Long live *Bangabandhu*. Long live Bangladesh.

15th August



## Remembering Bangabandhu's Vision & Expectations for Bangladesh on August 15, 2021



### Professor Dr. Fakrul Alam

*Director, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Research Institute for Peace and Liberty  
UGC Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka*

What we must remember on this day is that *Bangabandhu* was able to lead us all to Bangladesh because of a lifetime of struggle where his determination and ingrained ideas about democracy played a major part. This involved his dislike of tyrannical governments, feudal mindsets and oligarchic dispositions. Reflecting rhetorically on the dismal showing of the Pakistan Muslim League in a by-election held in East Pakistan in 1949, which early in his political career the young Mujib had worked for enthusiastically, and which had spearheaded the Indian Muslim goal of creating Pakistan in 1947, that is to say only two years back, *Bangabandhu* writes, "How had the Muslim League, a party that had been so enthusiastically supported by people in 1947, tasted defeat so swiftly? It could be put down to coterie politics, rule of tyranny, inefficient administration, and sound economic planning" (*UM*, 127). In other words, even on the basis of his two-year experience as a politician in the newly created state of Pakistan, the young Mujib could see that what was needed was principled politics and the pursuit of national development based on respect for everyone, regardless of class, caste, race or religion.

*Bangabandhu* was convinced that to do anything worthwhile, and to qualify for leadership and achieve goals that are democratic and good for the nation and its people as a whole, what is needed is the strength of mind and the capacity to endure dictatorial and undemocratic measures, as well as the determination to persevere in achieving goals one believed in. To his mentor Husyen Shaheed Suhrawardy he had said in 1948, "God has given me the strength to stand up against injustice and oppression. And you have taught me to deal with such things too" (116).

15th August



He had realized as well that he would have to be ready “to make huge sacrifices” to achieve freedom and ensure that the rights that his people deserved be given to them (*UM*, 137). But he also knew that the principles he had espoused stemmed from his love of his people; ultimately, everything that he did would have to be driven by that love. Or as he put it, “People can be won over by good manners, love and sympathy, and not by force, hatred or oppressive means” (201). In the *Prison Diaries* (PD), he pointed out that when he himself was holding ministerial positions in East Pakistan in the 1950s, he had never “put into prison any of those leaders who have confined us in prison year after year out of self-interest” (PD, 87). In other words, he believed fervently that people should be given the right to express themselves freely. And in the constitution he had orchestrated along with his advisers, he must have felt that they had created a novel document for a country that was beginning anew, and was thus ready for a new beginning through it, as was the case he felt he had witnessed with Mao Zedong’s “New China” (NC) in his 1952 trip to the country. The vision and expectations *Bangabandhu* had for Bangladesh after the country was liberated was surely like the one he felt Mao had in creating China, “The truth is: this is a new country, new people, new modes of behavior... [there is] ...newness in the air everywhere (NC, 98).

### **Bangabandhu and Nationalism**

Reading the *Unfinished Memoirs*, it is clear to us that the young Mujib was driven to the concept of Pakistan by, on the one hand, his experience of the oppression and exploitation Bengali Muslims suffered at the hands of Hindu landlords and money-lenders, and on the other, the vision of an independent nation outlined in the Lahore Resolution tabled on March 23, 1940 by one of his heroes of the time, *Sher-e-Bangla* Fazlul Haq. In other words, initially *Bangabandhu* worked for “two Pakistans, as envisaged in the Lahore Resolution. One would comprise Bengal and Assam and would be called East Pakistan.... The other Pakistan would consist of the Punjab, Baluchistan, the Frontier Province and Sindh” (*UM*, 23). In retrospect, we can say then that in the first stage of his career, he was driven by a vision of what we can call in retrospect (East) Pakistani nationalism that had been inculcated in him partly by his mentors of that period, Fazlul Haq, Abul Hashim, and above all, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy. He was also inspired in his nationalistic zeal at this time by his reading of Bangladesh’s history—the “Sepoy Mutiny and the Wahabi Movement...Titu Mir’s rebellion and Haji Shariatullah’s Fariazi movement” (*UM*, 24). But there was a side of him that gravitated too to the examples of “dedicated Hindus promoting Hindu-Muslim unity like Deshbandhu C. R. Das, Netaji [Subhas Bose] and Rabindranath [Tagore]” (24).

15th August



That side of *Bangabandhu's* latent Bangladeshi nationalism, where Hindus and Muslims would not be pitted against one another, and could not only live harmoniously together, but eventually work together for the creation of Bangladesh, became stronger after the mayhem he had first-hand experience of in the 1946 riots in Calcutta and his contact with victims of riots there and in Bihar refugee camps. Once again, *Bangabandhu's* political guru played a key part in the evolution of his political consciousness through his speeches and talks in Faridpur and Khulna. In Faridpur, *Bangabandhu* writes, Suhrawardy addressed meetings that "stopped many Hindus from leaving the country and also reduced the flow of Muslim refugees from West Bengal and Bihar" (108). In Khulna, *Bangabandhu* reports as well in *The Unfinished Memoirs*, Suhrawardy "talked informally with Hindu and Muslim leaders about ensuring communal harmony and urged everyone to work for this goal" (108).

It is not surprising then that *Bangabandhu* would not have any truck with any nationalistic ideology that had no reflection in it of the Bengal he loved, and that did not promote the harmonious co-existence of its peoples. His nationalism also bore imprints of the region's landscape and its language. In his account of his short visit to Ajmer in 1946 we can see how the landscape of Bangladesh had sedimented in his nationalistic consciousness. In his response to the lake he saw in this otherwise dry part of Rajasthan he reflects, "We are people from a riverine place and we love our waterbodies. How can I explain how difficult it was for us to leave this lake in a land that was otherwise a desert?" (*UM*, 61). And as for language, this is how *Bangabandhu* remembered reacting to Jinnah's outrageous declaration of having Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan in 1948, "Every race loves its mother tongue. No nation has tolerated any attempt to insult its mother tongue" (*UM*, 104). By this time *Bangabandhu* is clearly oscillating towards a nationalism that had Bengali at its core and is imbued with his pride in the achievements of his people. In a telling episode of *The Unfinished Memoirs*, we find him being asked by a few West Pakistani lawyers with whom he was sharing the backseat to recite Kazi Nazrul Islam's poems in a car that Suhrawardy was driving. He does so but decides to "recite a few lines from Rabindranath Tagore's poems" unprompted, as if to indicate that to him being Bengali also meant acknowledging the importance of the Nobel Laureate (*UM*, 217). And it is no surprise then that in the 1952 Peace Conference in Beijing he spoke in Bangla. After all, he says, "why should I not speak in Bengali, the language of "the majority of Pakistan's population", but also of "our great poet Rabindranath Tagore?" (*UM*, 230). In the *Prison Diaries*, he asks an inmate who is gifted musically to "sing songs whose lyrics and tunes are rooted in the soil of Bengal" (*PD*, 128). And in the last of the diaries collected in the volume, when he is being taken to the cantonment by the Pakistani Army intelligence people, and the possibility that he might be murdered

15th August



by them afterwards troubles him, he writes movingly about his ultimate desire, "I realized suddenly what was going on. I saluted the land of Bengal and said to it, 'I love you; I hope Mother that my body will find a little space in your soil after I die'" (PD, 273).

Soon after he wrote this entry in his prison book, *Bangabandhu* had been freed, for the Pakistani rulers had to give in to the demand of Bengalis to release their leader. He would then embark on an extensive campaign in the general elections Yahya Khan and his men were forced to hold in 1970. Writing about the way *Bangabandhu* had by this time become the embodiment of Bangladeshi nationalism to his people, Rehman Sobhan, one of his close advisers of the period, wrote in an entry in the magazine *Forum* on November 7, 1970.

The fact is that he has become a symbol in his own lifetime. He has come to personify Bengali nationalism, just as Nasser personified Arab nationalism, or *Quaid Muslim* nationalism. After 23 years of oppression and neglect people in search of deliverance turn on one man and focus their accumulated hopes on his person. Bengali nationalism is now the vehicle of hopes and ambitions!

I would say that through his own emotionally nuanced articulation of his ideas on nationalism, recorded throughout his prison notebooks, and articulated in his campaign speeches, *Bangabandhu* had managed to convey the ideas and values rooted in his love of the country, its people, landscape and culture, that would ultimately find expression in the Bangladesh constitution.

This August 15, and every other that we live through, let us recall *Bangabandhu's* vision for Bangladesh and his expectations for the country. Let us remember how he had wanted our nation to be, based on his own experience not only of life in undivided British India and in post-partition Pakistan. Let us recall how he embodied his dreams for the nation with the help of his advisers and other like-minded patriotic people of the land, first in the 6 points and then in the Bangladesh constitution. In the face of almost impossible odds, he had braved prison for year after year and liberated Bangladesh from its oppressors. He had begun to take the nation forward to becoming the kind of nation he wanted to be, when on August 15, he and almost all of his family members were gunned down by men who did not want Bangladesh to be a truly independent country and a country meant for all Bangladeshis. Thankful that his dreams for Bangladesh are now being realized by our present government, let us remember his loving and compassionate man and work together to make Bangladesh the truly democratic, secular and prosperous country that he wanted it to be—a true *shonar bangla* or Bengal of gold!

<sup>1</sup>Sobhan, p. 277.

**15th** August



## **Bangabandhu In Classroom: Experiences from 'Bangladesh 1971' course at IUB, 2014-2021**



### **Professor Zakir Hossain Raju**

*Head, Department of Media and Communication, SLASS, IUB*

I remember the darkest day of our national history, 15 August 1975, only through some vignettes. This was the year when I was admitted to grade one, I just started going school from January 1975. I do remember how all our family elders congregated in the yard of our suburban home in Dhaka on that August morning. I still can hear the sound of their collective mourning and murmuring there. I was told that there will be no school on that day. As a 6-year old, was I a bit happy learning that? I as a little kid of course had no idea what great loss we incurred on that very morning.

After thirty-five or so years, I turned into a pedagogue and *Bangabandhu* came back to me in a much larger frame. This was around 2012-13, when I was developing a very unique course called '*BDS109: Bangladesh 1971: Through the Lenses*' at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). Before that I had several encounters with him in some other places. I have encountered him when doing my Master's thesis on *Swadhin Bangla Betar* (SBB) at University of Dhaka in 1995. The twenty-five organisers and activists of SBB whom I interviewed in length and on video, went on narrating how big was the shadow of *Bangabandhu* in each of their minds during their difficult times—be that in Kalurghat, Ramgarh, or Ballygunje, Kolkata.

15th August



I encountered *Bangabandhu* again in early 2000s, as I was researching the early days of Dhaka film industry. This was as part of my Doctoral project on “Bangladesh Cinema and National Identity,” conducted in Melbourne. I was intrigued by the fact that how a young *Bangabandhu* (the then Industries Minister of East Pakistan), tabled the bill in the provincial parliament to establish Film Development Corporation (FDC) studio in Dhaka in mid-1950s.

So, it was not merely coincidence that I was trusted upon to create a repository of books on Bangladesh Liberation War for setting up a special liberation war and *Bangabandhu* corner at IUB library in 2011. Or, the fact that in 2012, I did take it on myself that a course based on 1971 War of Liberation should be offered at the Foundation level for all IUB students. I looked around and found no such course taught at any of the universities in Bangladesh. So, I took my book *Liberation War in Mass Media* (1993/2011) as the starting point, and developed a course focusing on how 1971 has been represented in and through many different art, media and cultural forms.

This approach ensured that the students in the course get multiple glimpses of our Liberation War from varied perspectives ('lenses') of our literary authors, artistic minds and media producers of all kinds. Once I received the nod from the IUB Academic Council, in 2014, I started to teach 'BDS109: Bangladesh 1971' course, thus making the IUB institution the first and foremost university in Bangladesh (and elsewhere) offering such a course on our Liberation War. At the beginning there was only one section of students that I was teaching. Over the years, the course grew exponentially. During 2019-21, we are offering seven or more sections of this course—being taught by six of my able colleagues from the Department of Media and Communication—and, reaching out to 350 or more students each trimester.

How do we approach as big an event like Liberation War in this course? And, how do we teach on/about *Bangabandhu* here?

Firstly, *BDS109* is designed as a foundation course for undergraduate students which acquaint them with the tumultuous history of 1971, starting from the early twentieth century. We aim to equip students with the factual knowledge and analytical skills to enable them to critically appreciate the emergence of the nation through different perspectives. We intend to make the course a collective site to learn together about the complex interconnection between the War of Liberation and its representation in/through various art, media and cultural forms as well as key documents and 1971 news recordings.

15th August



Therefore, we do read and re-read *Bangabandhu's* 7th March speech and the declaration of six-point program as historic documents. Through these two we not only construct a representational discourse of 1971 Liberation War, but also excavate the history of the nationhood of Bangladesh as a team with our students. We do listen and analyse the 7th March speech line by line, and I ask my students to collect as many photographs and paintings on *Bangabandhu* as possible, and then present and discuss in class. I thus try to bring some deep understandings on the different 'lenses' through which *Bangabandhu* has been represented.

The *BDS109* faculty and students also work as a team to critically study some of the influential media, art and literary texts on our Liberation War. These texts range from novels, short stories, songs and poems to films, television dramas, stage-plays and street-theatres—all of which have produced some kind of narratives on and around 1971. *Bangabandhu* of course emerges in larger-than-life ways when we analyse all these texts. For example, novels by Syed Shamsul Huq, Mahmudul Huq and Shaheen Akhter, or the memoirs by Sufia Kamal, Jahanara Imam and Hasan Azizul Huq, or the paintings by Shahabuddin, films by Tareque Masud and Morshedul Islam—not only continuously narrate and re-narrate the Liberation War and its various aspects and aftermaths, but always bring the spirit of *Bangabandhu* and the independence of Bangladesh in all our classes.

I then feel myself as fortunate that I developed this course seven years back and we are now able to cast in so many young minds here to think and learn about *Bangabandhu* and 1971 as a group within such a discursive manner in this course.

15th

August



## Artistic or Instinctive? Exploring the Mujib "magic"



**Professor Imtiaz A. Hussain**

*Head, Global Studies & Governance (GSG) Program, SLASS, IUB*

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (childhood alias, Khokon) was not an ordinary man. That was known to all from the very start and at every level, from the grassroots to the pinnacles of global leadership. Even as a teenager, he attracted two of undivided India's political icons, *Sher-e-Bangla* A.K. Fazlul Haque and Huseyn Shahid Suhrawardy, to visit him in Gopalganj, Faridpur. Suhrawardy even went to Mujib's Gopalganj Mission School. A bumpy yet "forever" relationship unfolded right here in remote Faridpur between an Urdu-speaking aristocratic mentor and an unfolding yet already fierce nationalist Bangalee protégé. Another new relationship proved more challenging, between the people's *Sher-e-Bangla*, who declined the school invitation, and the people's future "Father of the Nation". Mujib showed to the people the "fatherly" obligation towards a child: **tolerance** (relevant for a popularly dubbed "hot-minded" people) and **mutual respect** (imperative in a patriarchal/parochial society).

How Bangladesh's future "Father of the Nation" fares against other such "fathers" helps us place Mujib in any "era" of nationalism. Obvious opening observations: how many others carried the rough edges of a lifetime mission in his or her teenage years; or hosted, because of that possession, the "who's who" of his or her time so early in life; indeed, how many could flow with **public** sentiments over them (as in segmented societies), rather than **patriarchal** and **private**?

Widely seen as the "Father of Modern Cuba," Fidel Castro confessed he had not seen the world's highest mountain, but after seeing Mujib, he no longer had to. Yet, his original mission remains unfilled even today: Cuba continues to be ostracized, long after the Cold War. With the possible exception of Simón Bolívar, no other "Father of Nation" had/has a country's name derived from his: born in Venezuela, he kept Bolivia, known as Upper Peru in early 19th Century, on the back-burner.

15th August



Yet this segmented society was so inspired by Bolívar that they named the country after him. We see how his revolutionary spirit had caught fire far beyond Venezuela, right across Spain's Latin America. Segmented societies do not allow bottom-up impulses to reach the policy-making upper echelons, a Latin experience not fully quenched until after the 1980s. This also contrasts with *Bangabandhu's* Bangladesh case. Stemming from all social stripes, his supporters, led by *Kendria Chhatriya Sangram Parishad's* Tofael Ahmed, pinned the "*Bangabandhu*" title upon him on February 23, 1969, in Race Course. This "Friend of Bangalees" title was coined when an independent "Bangladesh" was not even in anyone's language, dictionary, mindset, or ivory-tower pipeline: democracy, nationalism, secularity, and socialism mattered far more, in large part because of the stiff challenges they faced.

Impacts of a similar kind can be viewed from a different "foreign" trajectory for Sheikh Mujib. U.S. Senator Edward Kennedy, who voluntarily personalized just about every Bangladesh trial and tribulation from the very start (for example, he visited 1971 refugee camps in India; and his February 1972 *Bot-tala* speech in Dhaka University about a devastated country's Liberation War). His most famous words were spoken in *Bangabandhu's* shadow: "We are all Bengalees, we are all Americans." His audience, composed mostly of that venerable institution's students, was led by the *Chhatra League*, whose very seed was sown and nurtured by none other than Mujib on January 4, 1948 (creating *East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League*, Pakistan's first student opposition group). *Bot-tala* became a student Rubicon: crossing it was the stuff of pre-1971 politics because of the multifaceted inequities (meaning protests were plenty, with speeches to ever-increasing audiences, converging, as they did, to *Bot-tala*, *Paltan Maidan*, or Race Course).

Kennedy's "We are all Americans" reference ironically preceded *Le Monde's* similar 9/11 refrain by 30 years. David Sedaris wrote that *Le Monde* article on 9/12. It was previously popularized by two World War songs independently by Carrie Jacobs-Bond and O.S. Grinnell. It became an expression of sympathy and solidarity from the very country gifting the Statue of Liberty to the United States, which was also top U.S. Independence War supporter against Great Britain. It blended well with the new 21st Century "Either you are with us or against us" mindset, policy orientation, and era. The United States refused to recognize the Bangladesh Liberation War, in fact, silently egged Pakistan on, through a number of lapses (like pushing the gateway to China more than halting the Bangladesh bloodshed; or sending the *U.S.S. Enterprise* for a symbolic Bay of Bengal appearance during the December 1971 war). How the United States turned one-hundred-and-eighty degrees to engage in full-fledged partnership with Bangladesh while retreating from Pakistan cannot be fully explained without referencing the roles of *Bangabandhu* and Kennedy clearly and robustly.

15th August



Ambassador Earl L. Miller echoed this when arriving for his new post in Dhaka in 2018. He visited both *Bangabandhu* homes. The Dhanmandi stop was in December 2018, 46 years after the Kennedy entourage, including his wife, Joan, and nephew did. They were first greeted, not by the veteran in that group, Sheikh Mujib, the host, but by the youngest, Sheikh Russell, reiterating a defining theme in *Bangabandhu*'s life story, of the salience given the youth. The Ambassador's Gopalganj visit for *Shok Dibosh*, 2019, raises an interesting question: how bonded other countries are to Bangladesh can be partly measured by how many ambassadors make this trip, how many times by each ambassador, and when in their tenure they go, as a neophyte or veteran. How his Excellency's Dhanmandi comments (" . . . We will work together and carry forward this memory and legacy . . . .") resonate so well with Kennedy's ("We are all Bengalees. We are all Americans."), only strengthens the constancy of change. Mujib spearheaded and symbolized this in our Bangalee case. How we cultivate and retain becomes the next challenge.

More vivid portrayals of *Bangabandhu*'s international salience was his warm reception by non-aligned leaders at the 1973 conference in Algiers; and the February 1974 Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Lahore summit. The former reflected (and still remains) the bedrock feature of our foreign policy: friendship with all, malice to none. The latter accepted a huge Muslim country into its flock, but by crossing another South Asian Rubicon: Pakistan recognizing Bangladesh. Nobel Prize-winner Anwar Sadat greeted Mujib in both, as too the president of the first Arab country to recognize Bangladesh, Algeria's Houari Boumedienne. Along with six other Muslim countries, he actually brought Pakistan and Bangladesh together. He saw Mujib as a "brother" (as described by current Algerian Ambassador, His Excellency Rabah Larbi). It helped loosen *Bangabandhu*'s *sine qua non* Pakistan position of "no visit to a country until recognition." Lahore was the very city where Mujib's Six-Points were first announced, in another February, in 1966. Recognition came on February 22, 1974. Mujib flew on February 23, no less in Boumedienne's aircraft. He received a salute, the Bangladesh anthem was played, and he shook hands with President Afzal Ilahi Choudhri, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali, who three years or so ago released Mujib from house-arrest (even proposed, after December 16, 1971, a Bangladesh-Pakistan realignment), and the very 1971 "Butcher of Bangladesh," Commander-in-Chief, Tikka Khan. Sagacious and gracious, Mujib did not have to bat even an eyelid on the occasion. His stature conveyed him to be some sort of a Chief Guest of the Summit.

Two other *Bangabandhu* exposures from that Lahore airport ceremony deserve attention. The first was how Bhutto, one of the abettors of Operation Searchlight, could not do anything to his arch 1970-71 rival, Mujib.

15th August



General Yahya Khan before him was also stumped in handling the outright December 1970 election winner (and election he himself called). Even Yahya's predecessor, Field Marshall Ayub Khan, after concocting an "Agartala Conspiracy Case" in 1968 to justify Mujib's arrest, also backtracked in February 1969 by releasing Mujib (to attend the Rawalpindi RTC get-together) to dampen seething Bangalee anger. As evident, how Mujib towered over three successive Pakistan presidents speaks volumes of leadership qualities, whose central message was simple: **bottom-up voices** not only speak louder than coercion, but by feeding stature, become **the game-winning card**. How many world leaders claiming this can back it up with concrete action?

The other exposure: Boumedienne paving the way for Bangladesh, the second largest Muslim country, to re-enter the Islamic community. Sharing his OIC chairmanship with the host country's Bhutto allowed King Feisal to open the door to Bangla-Saudi relations from 1974. Recognition followed in 1975, with over two million Bangladeshis living/working in Sau'di Arabia, in 2021. In other words, over a quarter of all Bangladeshis living abroad can be found in Sau'di Arabia; and if we add the United Arab Emirates, which typically tip-toes Sau'di policies and has similar migrant worker needs, that proportion becomes astronomical. Though many of our leaders have claimed credit for this, but the founding stone cannot but be Bangabandhu's. It showed how the **secularity** principle the country was created upon was not atheism.

Mujib's mission to restructure, not rebel, led him (with Suhrawardy), to support an independent Greater Bengal platform in 1946. Great Britain took this proposal very seriously and positively as a third post-Empire possibility. The very nationalism driving him into dividing India was interpreted by his other 1938 Gopalganj visitor, the stalwart *Sher-e-Bangla*, far more broadly, in terms not just of Greater Bengal, but all of India. Neither got exactly what they wanted and when they sought it. Mujib agreed to hold hands with the *Muslim League* (through the *Awami Muslim League*) to strengthen Bangalee identity, even embrace left-leaning Moulana Abdul Hamid Bhasani, whose deep religious obedience meshed with Mujib's devout but privately observed Muslim obedience: **both prayed together in jail**; and after Pakistan's Founding Father, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, threatened with his "Urdu only Pakistan" 1948 vision, Mujib slowly broke with the *Muslim League* in 1955.

As evident in this essay, Bangladesh's Liberation War was premised upon principles necessary to win that war: democracy because it was botched in the December 1970 election; nationalism to fuel the Liberation War itself; secularity to unite a country where 15% of the people were Hindus and where many ethnic minorities also lived; and socialism, to lift the truly impoverished masses rather than wage war against the upper classes.

15th August



Only when these were satiated could the principles be allowed to loosen up, or tightened further, as and when needed. In other words, since they had fulfilled their *sine qua non* duty, they could be relaxed. Attempts to institutionalize those principles continue today in varied forms under Mujib's elder daughter, Sheikh Hasina. After almost two decades of military rule, democracy is more than sinking it. Nationalism helps, for example, on cricket fields and Victory Day, but not to sell ready-made garments, for instance. Similarly, secularity prevails, not formally as then, but religious expressions can now be more freely aired, and capture more public time and space than in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s for as long as *Bangabandhu* was alive. Finally, though socialism throttled innovative minds, Bangladesh has not gone full-fledged into or under corporate control (or lifestyles): micro-finance, for example, reflects the hybrid model better characterizing the country than other types.

In that illustrious life what stands out is how **natural** Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was: **he did not have to learn the art of politics, diplomacy, or leadership**. Never can one recall him reading from a script; and his text was so simple, Main Street and *Gram Bangla* citizens understood and relished every word, and followed them almost always intuitively. Like a Pied Piper, Mujib played his inborn tunes all the way to his own Hamelin, that is, the land of the Bangalees, Bangladesh. **Leadership, politics, and diplomacy came to him instinctually**, a feature probably gone forever now as we move into the Fourth Industrial Age of automated actions, beliefs, and calculations.

Whichever way we look, see, sense, hear, or feel everything *Bangabandhu* did, said, wished, or felt, the future looks promising because two critical seeds were directly sown by *Bangabandhu*: **empower the youth**; and **mobilize women**. As a student leader from 1938, and founder of various student organizations, one of *Bangabandhu*'s softest spots was for the **youth**: it is that youth, the ones he knew, who are today, on the country's 50th Birth Anniversary, passing the torch to another generation which never saw or heard or felt *Bangabandhu* directly. *Bangabandhu*'s democracy laid the platform for fully emancipating our women, not just in the polling booths, but also from patriarchic or parochial strictures, something the RMG sector is silently advancing. It is a task needing much, much larger proportion of elected representatives becoming women.

Bangladesh's 50th Anniversary is the sturdiest salute to our "Father". We remember it with joy all year long. Yet, on this August 15, we must stop to reflect, rekindle, and reminisce soberly, somberly. These, in turn, hold the key to a more resolute sense of identity. And that is a load too heavy to handle, from the very start to the actual end, for almost all "Fathers". *Bangabandhu*'s cutting-edge gift makes him stand out even in any leadership Pantheon.

15th

August

## IUB's "Shok Dibosh": A Summation



### Professor Taiabur Rahman

Dean, School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences (SLASS), IUB

Whether as a student leader or politician, *Bangabandhu* dedicated his whole life for the cause of his own Bangalee people, a message that came across loud and clear throughout the entire IUB *Shok Dibosh* commemoration on August 14. That he spent approximately one-fourth of his life in Pakistani jails, which became his "second home", shows both the sufferings he faced and the dedication he had.

From 1947, Pakistani political and military rulers cornered all three giants of Bengal: Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, *Sher-e-Bangla* A.K. Fazlul Haque, and Huseyn Shahid Suhrawardy. They could not Mujib, even as they massacred so many Bangalees in that bloody 1971. His fearlessness, bravery, and unflinching leadership stood out even in an august company.

Mujib had enormous respect for students, teachers, and the seats of learning, the universities. This was most evident in how he laid the foundation stone of today's *Chaatra League* in 1948, and appointed the best academics as vice-chancellors of the universities during his prime minister tenure after 1971.

The current generation of students can know about him and his life and work by taking university courses on Bangladesh history and culture, as was also presented in the commemoration through the IUB example. These same students can travel through the political history of Bangladesh by visiting the Liberation War Museum. Wherever they go, *Bangabandhu* footprints or fingerprints can be found.

Bestowed the *Bangabandhu* title in February 1969, two years later, his own people liberated their own land for him. It is no wonder Sheikh Mujib is rightfully regarded as the greatest Bangalee leader. Indeed, a martyred Mujib has grown to become far larger than the powerful and most imposing Mujib alive. There is no stopping the eternal Mujib—the Father of the Nation—and the Bangladesh that emerged from his care and concern is today well on its way to becoming the *Sonar Bangla* his predecessors dreamed of and idolized, and that he espoused most vociferously when his time came.



**August**



## **Bangabandhu's Chronology**

- 1916:** Lucknow Pact signals Hindu-Muslim communal harmony
- 1920, March 17:** born in in Tungipara, 3<sup>rd</sup> child of Sheikh Lutfur Rahman and Sheikh Sahera Khatun, nickname "Khoka", with other siblings: Fatema Begum, Asia Begum, Khadeji Begum, and Sheikh Abu Naser
- 1923:** Bengal Pact reflex harmony of 5 leaders: Subhas Chandra Bose, Chittaranjan Das, *Sher-e-Bangla* A.K. Fazlul Haque, & Huseyn Shahid Suhrawardy; lasted during Chittaranjan lifetime (until 1925)
- 1937:** Suhrawardy elected to Bengal Legislative Assembly; made Minister of Commerce and Labour by *Sher-e-Bangla* Fazlul Haque
- 1938:** marries Begum Fazilatunnesa: they have 5 children: Sheikh Hasina (current Prime Minister), Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, Sheikh Rehana, and Sheikh Russell
- 1938:** first encounter with Suhrawardy in Gopalganj Mission School, Faridpur, which he visits because of reputation learned of Mujib; *Sher-e-Bangla* Fazlul Haq comes to Faridpur with him, but does not visit the school: start of Mujib's drift towards Suhrawardy over Fazlul Haque, even split over the India Partition issue
- 1941:** is elected councilor of *Bengal Muslim Chhatra Federation*
- 1943:** is elected councilor *Bengal Provincial Muslim League* (part of the All-India Muslim League)
- 1943:** distributes rice from father's stock to needy amid in Bengal Famine
- 1946:** uncontested election victory as General Secretary of *Islamia College* (today called Maulana Azad College), student council; Mujib lives in 24 Baker Hostel, a tourist site under Bangladesh High Commission custody
- 1946, August 16:** "Great Calcutta Killings"
- 1946-47:** Suhrawardy as Prime Minister of Bengal leads *Bengal Province Muslim League* in the 1946 election
- 1947, May 20:** joins Suhrawardy to establish a sovereign and independent Bengal, a third country from the British Indian Empire; part of a 5-part proposal plan, seriously considered by British Empire
- 1947, June 20:** Bengal partition vote in Bengal Legislative Assembly: 120 against it, 90 in favor; but West Bengal legislators vote 58-21 to partition, East Bengal 106-35 not to

15th

August



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with his father Sheikh Lutfur Rahman & mother Sahera Khatun



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, a young football player. Front row third from left (1940)



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the young student leader (standing at the back) and Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy with Mahatma Gandhi in Kolkata. They were there to support Mahatma Gandhi's protest against the Hindu-Muslim communal riots (1947)



Sheikh Mujib lived in Room 24 of Baker Government Hostel while studying at the Islamia College (now Maulana Azad College) in Kolkata (1946). His room has been transformed into a museum to commemorate his memory.



**August**



- 1948, March 11:** *Chhatra League* protests begin against Bangla exclusion from Pakistan official language status
- 1948, March 19:** Mohammad Ali Jinnah, Founder and President of Pakistan, mentions in Dhaka, “Urdu would be the only language” of Pakistan, in Race Course meeting
- 1948:** founding member of *East Pakistan Awami Muslim League*
- 1949, June 23:** Suhrawardy becomes President of *All Pakistan Awami Muslim League*, left-leaning Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani as President of *East Bengal Awami Muslim League*
- 1949:** Mujib as one of the founding joint secretaries of *East Bengal Awami Muslim League*
- 1950-51:** time in jail; hunger strike from February 16, 1951, release on 27th
- 1952, February 21:** Section 144 curbs language-based protests; half a dozen die, begins *Shahid Dibosh* or Language Martyrs Day
- 1953:** elected General Secretary of *Awami Muslim League*, and remained there until 1966
- 1954, March:** provincial election victory of *United Front* (Maulana Bhasani, Fazlul Haque, and Huseyn Shahid Suhrawardy, representing *Awami Muslim League*, *Krishok Praja*, the *Gonotantrik*, & the *Nizam-e-Islam* parties)
- 1954:** becomes Minister of Agriculture & Forests
- 1954:** *Sher-e-Bangla* forms *United Front* government; quick dismissal
- 1954, May 30:** arrest (release December 23)
- 1955:** *Awami Muslim League* becomes *Awami League*, Mujib re-elected as General Secretary
- 1955:** *Awami League* seeks provincial autonomy
- 1956:** becomes Minister of Commerce, Labour, Industries in Aaur Rahman Khan's cabinet
- 1956:** Suhrawardy begins a short-lived prime minister tenure; couldn't handle joint electorate opposition, eventually resigned under pressure of President Iskander Mirza
- 1957, May 30:** Mujib resigns from coalition government cabinet
- 1957, June 24-July 13:** Mujib's official visit to China

15th

August



Sheikh Mujib taking his fellow compatriot Shawkat Ali to hospital, who was injured by a police attack in front of the Secretariat during a demonstration demanding Bangla as one of the State languages of Pakistan (1948)



After being released from Dhaka Central jail, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman accompanied by his father Sheikh Lutfar Rahman, Shamsul Huq, Yar Mohammed Khan and others on the way to attend the Awami League worker's meeting (June 26, 1949)



Chief Minister *Sher-e-Bangla* A.K. Fazlul Huq administering oath to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as one of the Cabinet members, soon after the historic victory of the United Front (May 15, 1954).



United Front Cabinet members - in the bottom row from left, Khairat Hossain, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, *Sher-e-Bangla* A.K. Fazlul Huq, Ataur Rahman Khan, Saratchandra Majumdar, Mahmud Alii



As part of their election campaign Sheikh Mujibur Rahman & Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy travelling in Rajshahi by boat (1954)



**August**



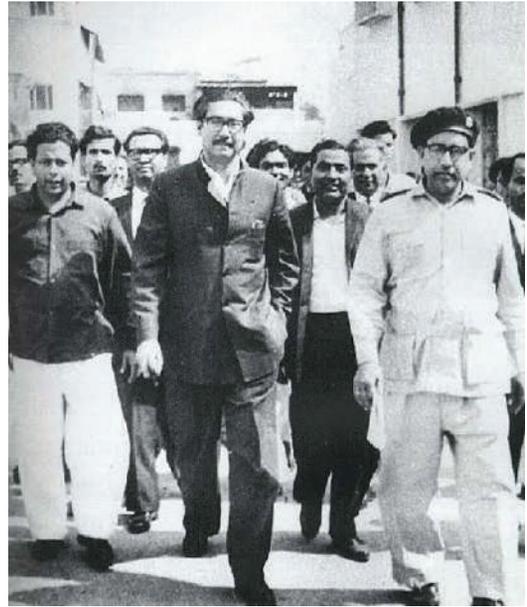
- 1957:** *Bangabandhu's* U.S. visit: has operation in Boston; help from Professor Munier Chowdhury; meets him at Logan Airport, and sees Mujib throughout the stay; Mujib meets the Harvard Advisory Group (Dean Mason, David Bell, and Gustavo Papanek, the last being President, Boston Institute of Developing Economies)
- 1958, October:** arrest under Martial Law; as too Suhrawardy
- 1961:** visits Kalurghat, Chittagong (wherefrom his Declaration of Independence would be broadcasted ten years later)
- 1961:** release from jail, creates *Gonotantrik Front* with Suhrawardy, Lahore
- 1963:** goes to London, meets Suhrawardy
- 1963, December 5:** Suhrawardy dies in Beirut Mujib receives body in Dacca Airport
- 1964:** *Awami League* revival in his Dhanmandi, Road #32 home, with Moulana Abdur Rashid Takarbagish as President and Sheikh Mujib as General Secretary
- 1964:** takes *Awami League* out of National Democratic Front to push Bangla nationalism
- 1964:** jailing, just before election
- 1966-74:** Mujib serves as President, *Awami League*
- 1966, February 5:** proposes a 6-point plan
- 1966, May:** arrest under Defense of Pakistan Rules
- 1968, January:** Agartala "conspiracy" charge against Mujib
- 1968, June:** trial against Mujib, with non-Bangalee Justice S. A. Rehman as judge (with two Bangalee judges: Justice Mujibur Rahman Khan and Justice Muksumul Hakim); Sir Thomas Williams helps Mujib
- 1969, January:** Democratic Action Committee recommends Mujib to President Ayub to stop massive protests through round-table conference (RTC)
- 1969, January:** RTC summoning
- 1969, January:** public ransacks Justice Rehman's house; student Asadduzaman, is killed in street protests in Mohammadpur (Ayub Gate is renamed as Asad Gate); and Sergeant Zahirul Huq, also among the 35 Agartala so-called "conspirations," dies in army custody
- 1969, February 22:** Agartala Conspiracy Case collapses (under Defence Minister Vice Admiral A.R. Khan)

15th

August



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on behalf of the people of East Pakistan announced the 6-point programme, the Charter of Freedom of Bangalees in Lahore (February 5, 1966)



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his way to the Special Tribunal set up in the Dhaka Cantonment to try the Agartala Conspiracy Case (1969)



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was conferred with the title 'Bangabandhu' at a mammoth rally of students and masses at Race Course Maidan (February 23, 1969)



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib seen smiling with his daughter Sheikh Hasina after the Agartala conspiracy case was withdrawn and he was released from prison. With them are his wife Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib and son Sheikh Kamal (1969)



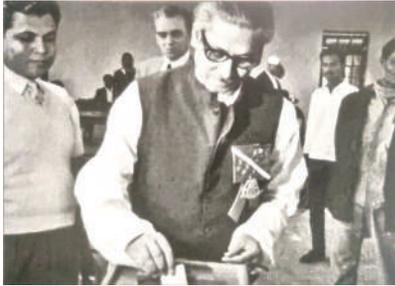
**August**



- 1969, February 23:** Mujib addresses huge crowd at Race Course; student leader, Tofail Ahmed leads *Kendria Chhatra Sangram Parishad* to give Mujib “Bangabandhu” blessing
- 1969, February 24:** Mujib flies to Rawalpindi peace talks
- 1970, December:** landslide victory for Awami League, bagging 167 out of 169 seats in East Pakistan
- 1971:** new slogans: “*joi bangla, Joi Bangabandhu* (Long live Bangla, long live *Bangabandhu*);” “*Tomar neta, amar neta, Sheikh Mujib, Sheikh Mujib* (Your leader, my leader, Sheikh Mujib, Sheikh Mujib);” “*Tumar desh, amaar desh, Bangladesh, Bangladesh* (Your home, my home, Bangladesh, Bangladesh)” ; “*Tumar-amar thikana, Padma-Meghna-Jamuna* (Your & my home, Padma -Meghna-Jamuna);” “*Bir Bangla astro dhor, Bangladeshi Swadhin kor* (Brave bangalees, hold weapons, free country)
- 1972, January 10:** Sheikh Mujib returns to Dhaka from Pakistan (through London and New Delhi)
- 1972, January 12:** becomes Prime Minister of Bangladesh to begin the country’s “2nd” government, until January 25, 1975
- 1973, March 7:** election, his *Awami League* wins 293 out of 300 seats
- 1974, February 22:** Pakistan recognizes Mujib’s Bangladesh
- 1974, February 23:** Mujib flies to Lahore for the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) summit; met at airport by President Chaudhry Fazle Elahi, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Commander-in-Chief Tikka Khan (the 1971 “Butcher of Bangladesh”); receives salute and Bangladesh national anthem played in the ceremony, first time
- 1975, January 25:** becomes President of Bangladesh under *Bangladesh Awami Krishak, Sramik League (BAKSAL)* until he was assassinated, along with his family, on August 15, 1975
- 1975, May 5:** *Bangabandhu* Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered his speech at the Executive Session on Commonwealth Heads of Government in Jamaica
- 1975, August 15:** disgruntled military & political leaders assassinate Mujib

15th

August



*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman casting his vote in the historic elections of the 1970 (December 7, 1970)*



*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivering his historic 7th March Speech at a huge public rally at Race Course Maidan (Suhrawardy Udyan, March 7, 1971)*



*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman acknowledging the reception of a huge gathering of followers upon his landing at the Tejgaon Airport (January 10, 1972)*



*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman takes oath as the Prime Minister of a free and independent Bangladesh (January 12, 1972)*



*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman takes oath as the Prime Minister for the second time following the first elections held in an Independent Bangladesh (March 16, 1973)*



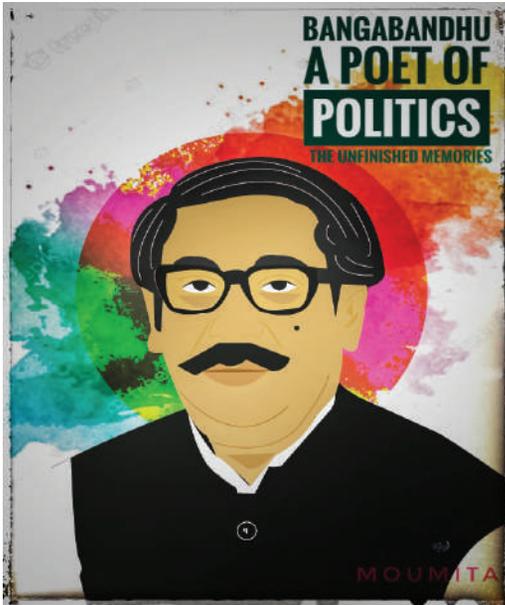
*Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the OIC meeting in Lahore (February 23, 1974)*

15th

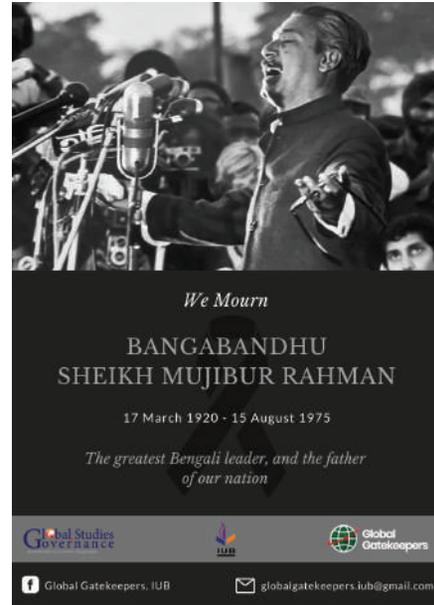
August



## Homage to the Father of the Nation by IUB Students' Clubs



**Dance Club**



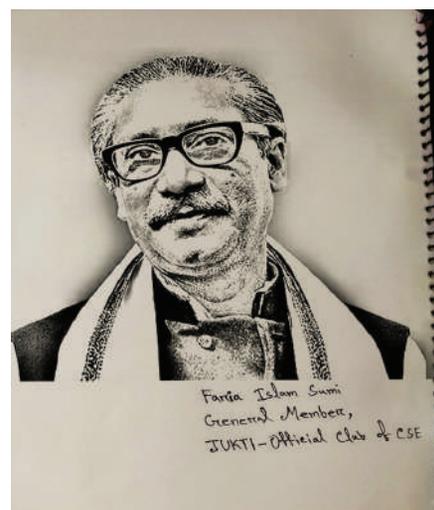
**Global Gatekeepers**

### *August Burns*

This day dawns just as gold as that summer day  
As young and old were told to brace, and then pray.  
For news had come, terrible, darker than the night  
A nightmare unbearable, a stain upon our light.  
Father! Father! Where are you? Father, answer us!  
Tell us, father, it's not true. August burns once.  
At your call we went to war. We won! Victory!  
Who, then, came to your door, and broke history?  
August burns just as bright as it did that day  
And though we mourn at heart, we still know your way.  
Father, father, do not fear, your children are strong,  
Your legacy shall live forever in legend and in song.

By

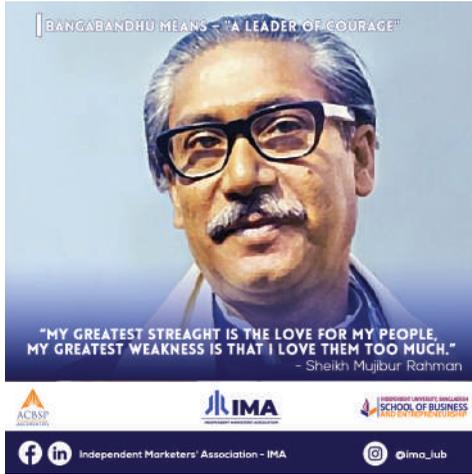
**IUB English Language Club**



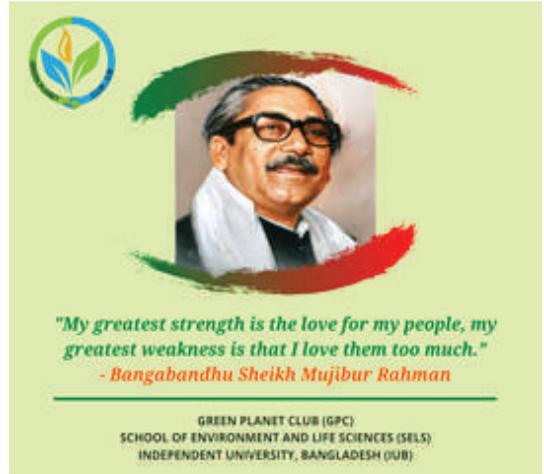
**Jukti Club**

15th

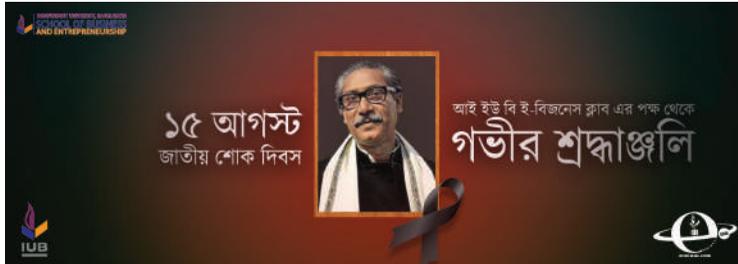
August



**Independent Marketers' Association**



**Green Planet Club**



**E-Business Club**



**Art Club**



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**RESIDENCE**  
**OF THE FATHER OF THE NATION . . .**  
**BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN**  
**VENUE**  
**OF BANGLADESH'S WORST CARNAGE**

**MOURNFULLY,**  
**INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH**