

On March 7th, 1971, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman delivered an epoch-making speech on the Racecourse Field of Ramana, Dhaka to a gathering of over two million people that shaped the birth of a nation called Bangladesh – our motherland. Bangabandhu spoke for about 19 minutes, but the speech moved the countrymen to snatch their long-desired independence. A speech that can move 75 million people towards a 9 months bloodshed struggle for freedom against the Pakistan can surely be named as a historical speech of all-time. The speech is not only significant for its appeal towards the war of independence of Bangladesh, but also for the everlasting interest for mankind, peacemaking, absolute democracy, and strong diplomatic structure.

Bangabandhu gave everyone a patient hearing but said very little. He knew exactly what his options were and their possible outcomes. By midday, the vast Ramna Racecourse was crowded with millions to hear from the 'Poet of Politics,' a title given to him earlier by Newsweek.

Bangabandhu arrived at the venue at 2.45 in the afternoon and spoke for only 19 minutes. It was an electrifying 19 minutes. Not only the people of entire Pakistan and East Bengal were glued to their radios, but the world was holding its breath. However, on orders from the central government, both the radio and the TV had to abstain from broadcasting the historic speech. In protest, the staff of the radio and TV walked out of their broadcasting stations. The speech was extempore and became one of the most memorable speeches ever given by a politician.

Bangabandhu started with the lines, "Today, I appeared before you with a heavy heart. You know everything and understand as well. We tried with our lives, but the painful matter is that today, in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi and Rangpur, the streets are dyed red with the blood of our brother. Today the people of Bengal want freedom, the people of Bengal want to survive, the people of Bengal want to have their rights. What wrong did we do?"

He mentioned four conditions for joining the National Assembly on 25 March:

1. The immediate lifting of martial law.
2. The immediate withdrawal of all military personnel to their barracks.
3. A proper inquiry into the loss of life during the conflict.
4. The immediate transfer of power to elected representatives of the people.

He also gave several directives for a civil disobedience movement, instructing that:

- People should not pay taxes.
- Government servants should take orders only from him.
- The secretariat, government and semi-government offices, and courts in East Pakistan should observe strikes, with necessary exemptions announced from time to time.
- Only local and inter-district telephone lines should function.

- Railways and ports could continue to function, but their workers should not cooperate if they were used to repress the people of East Pakistan.

Bangabandhu did not disappoint the waiting of millions, but said what he had to in an intelligent and statesman-like way. He ended his speech saying:

“The struggle this time is for emancipation, the struggle this time is for independence.”

The speech of 7th March has inspired the 200,000 people who were present on the Ramana Racecourse and the whole nation to take part in liberation war and free our country from the enemy. The speech of 7th March was an eye-opening declaration for the nation that we should stand together and free our country from West Pakistan. This speech stands as an oratory version of our declaration of independence. It also inspires the world today to seek for every individual's rights. It is so much moving that only after 18 days of the event when Operation Searchlight began, the people of the country stood against the militia without any fear and without any immediate indications. We must acknowledge the fact that though the declaration of independence came later, but this speech is the one that represented as the declaration for the 75 million people in general. We are proud that Bangladesh's Father of Nation had driven us with such a speech that we can hold dear to and gather strength defying the barriers of time and space. It is, our Declaration of Independence.