

BACKGROUND OF LIBERATION WAR

The Liberation war began on 26 March 1971 and ended with the liberation of Bangladesh on 16 December 1971. The armed struggle was the culmination of a series of events, situations and issues contributing to the progressively deteriorating relations between East and West Pakistan. The questions of land reforms, state language, interwing economic and administrative disparities, provincial autonomy, the defense of East Pakistan and many other consequential questions had been straining the relations between the two wings of Pakistan ever since independence of the country from Britain in 1947. [M.A. Rahim et. al., Bangladesher Itihas, P. 480].

GENERAL ELECTION

In the general elections held on 7 December 1970, the Awami League acquired an absolute majority. The Awami League secured 167 seats out of 169 National Assembly seats in East Pakistan (within total 313 seats) and won 288 out of 300 seats in the Provincial Assembly.

EVENTS IN 1971

- On 3rd January 1971, Shiekh Mujib conducted the oath of the peoples' representatives' at a meeting at the Race Course ground. Awami League members took an oath to frame a constitution on the basis of the six-point demand.
- On 5th January, Zulfiker Ali Bhutto, the leader of the People's Party, the majority party in West Pakistan, announced his readiness to form a coalition government at the centre with Awami League's Parliamentary Party at a meeting of the members of the National Assembly of his party.

EVENTS IN 1971

- On 27th January, Zulfiker Ali Bhutto arrived in Dhaka for talks with Mujib. The talks failed after three days of deliberations.
- Announcement on 13 February, President Yahya Khan summoned the National Assembly to sit in Dhaka on 3rd March. But on 15 February, Bhutto announced that he would boycott the session and demanded that power be handed over to the majority parties in East Pakistan and West Pakistan.

NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

Yahya Khan, the President of Pakistan, postponed the session of the National Assembly on 1st March 1971 for on indefinite period.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman termed this decision as 'unfortunate', and in protest he called hartal in Dhaka on 2 March and in the whole of East Pakistan on 3 March.

MARCH 2, 1971: THE FIRST FLAG FLIES

- March 2, 1971 is a historic day as on this day the very first flag of Bangladesh (the then East Pakistan) was hoisted, sending a message to the world that Bengalis were striving for independent nationhood.
- A historic student rally was held at Bottola on the Dhaka University (DU) campus where the flag, with Bangladesh's map in the center of a red circle against a green background, was hoisted on the rooftop of the Arts Faculty.



MARCH 2, 1971: THE FIRST FLAG FLIES

- Hundreds of agitating students and general people cheered the raising of the flag.
- Youths led by the then vice president of the DU Students'
 Union ASM Abdur Rob hoisted the flag in the presence of
 such firebrand student leaders as Shahjahan Siraj, Abdul
 Quddus Makhan and Nur-e-Alam Siddiqui.

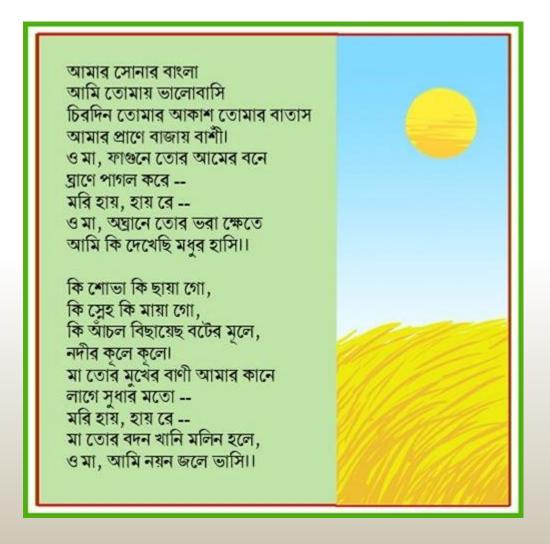


MARCH 3, 1971: HARTAL AND CURFEW

- On this day, back in 1971, a complete strike was observed all over East Pakistan. Dhaka observed the second day of hartal, with every office, court, factory, transport and education institute closed.
- Dhaka turned into a city of processions that converged in a rally at Paltan Maidan, organised by the Swadhin Bangla Chhatra Sangram Parishad.
- At different places in the country, spontaneous processions brought out by general people were fired upon, killing many in Dhaka and Chittagong. The then Pakistan government imposed a curfew in Dhaka, Sylhet and Rangpur.

MARCH 3, 1971: NATIONAL ANTHEM

- Chhatra Sangram Parishad declared Swadhinatar Ishteher at Paltan Maidan on 3 March in presence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.
- The poem of Rabindranath Tagore 'Amar Sonar Bangla... was selected as the national anthem of the independent Bangladesh.



HISTORICAL SPEECH OF 7 MARCH

During this time, on 7 March Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made a historic address at the Race Course which marked a turning point in the history of the Bengali nation.

In his address, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made specific charges against the Martial Law authorities which failed to transfer power to the elected representatives.

HISTORICAL SPEECH OF 7 MARCH

In this speech, he mentioned a further four-point condition to consider at the National Assembly Meeting on 25 March:

- 1. The immediate lifting of martial law.
- 2. Immediate withdrawal of all military personnel.
- 3. An inquiry into the loss of life.
- 4. Immediate transfer of power to the elected representative.



HISTORICAL SPEECH OF 7 MARCH

At the end of his speech, he made a clarion call, saying:

"The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation,

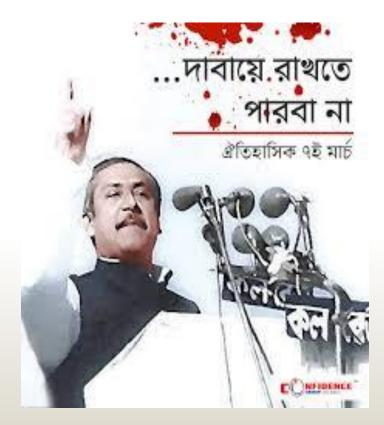
The struggle this time is the struggle for independence."



HISTORICAL SPEECH OF 7 MARCH: SIGNIFICANCE

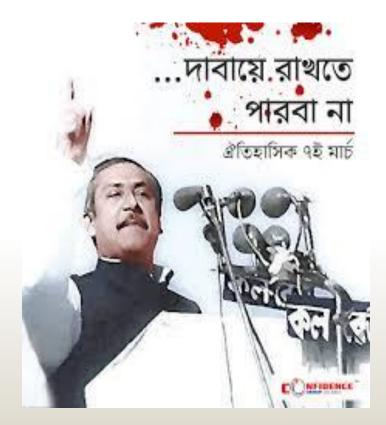
It gave the important message to our people that we would have to fight our final battle for independence.

The Pakistani military junta was not going to hand over power to us in a democratic manner.



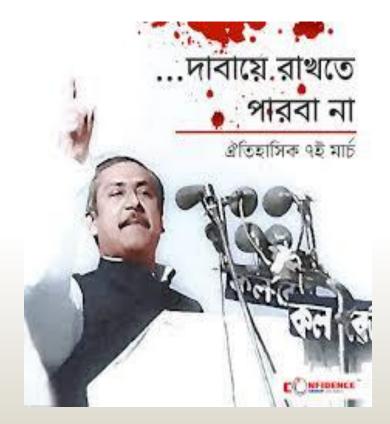
HISTORICAL SPEECH OF 7 MARCH: SIGNIFICANCE

- □The poem of our independence.
- ☐ The impromptu speech carried the hopes, aspirations and dreams of seventy-five million oppressed people. It heralded our great war of liberation.
- □ End of Pakistani rule (Colonialism) and people would live respectably as free citizens of a free country.



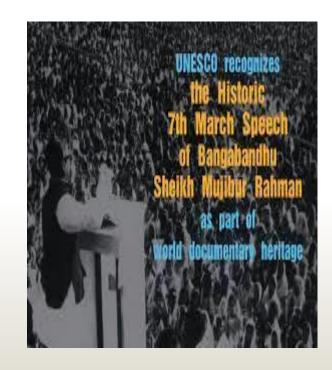
HISTORICAL SPEECH OF 7 MARCH: SIGNIFICANCE

- □The Pakistan government did not allow the live broadcast of the speech.
- ☐But on the next day, under tremendous pressure from the Bengali employees of the Radio and TV, it had to be put on air.



HISTORICAL SPEECH OF 7 MARCH: SIGNIFICANCE

□The recognition of the historic 7th March speech as a world documentary heritage by UNESCO has added a new layer of global significance to it.



NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT

- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman advised the people to prepare themselves for resistance movement against the enemy. He asked the people to continue the non-cooperation movement against the government of Yahya Khan.
- The entire nation carried out his instructions. Every organization including government offices, courts, banks, insurance companies, mills and factories obeyed his order. In reality, he ruled an independent Bangladesh from 7 March to 25 March.

YAHYA KHAN'S MOVE

- Meanwhile, President Yahya Khan and other leaders from West Pakistan came to Dhaka on 15 March to start a dialogue with Sheikh Mujib and his party. The dialogue began on the following day and continued intermittently down to 25 March morning.
- During the time, non-cooperation and hartals continued relentlessly. Students and leaders of various political parties had been declaring independence from March 2 and the spree continued down to 25 March.



- □While holding talks, the Pakistani military junta was bringing more troops to Bangladesh.
- □No sooner the talks failed, the genocide began at mid-night of 25 March 1971, and the Pakistan army launched its brutal crackdown in Dhaka with operation Search Light.

Source: Zunaid Kazi. "History: The Bangali Genocide, 1971



BUTCHER OF BENGAL

☐ The armed assault (codenamed Operation Searchlight) was led by General Tikka Khan, soon to be known as the Butcher of Bengal.



GENOCIDE 1971

- Genocide started with the army crackdown in Dhaka at midnight of 25 March 1971.
- The army cordoned Peelkhana, the headquarters of the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), Rajarbagh police barracks, and the Ansar headquarters at Khilgaon.
- More than 800 EPR men were first disarmed and arrested, and many of them were brutally killed.
- A few hundred of them, however, managed to escape and later joined the liberation forces.

OPERATION SEARCH LIGHT 25TH MARCH

□It was a planned military operation by Pakistan Army on 25th March. Before the beginning of the operation, all foreign journalists were systematically deported from East Pakistan.



OPERATION SEARCH LIGHT 25TH MARCH

 The troops arrived with personal or light weapons wearing civilian cloths.

• A separate ship brought their weapons and ammunitions. Seven thousand tons of ammunitions were brought in on the MV Swat.

OPERATION SEARCH LIGHT 25TH MARCH

Attack on Dhaka:

Although the violence focused on the provincial capital, Dhaka, it also affected all parts of East Pakistan.

Attack on University of Dhaka:

Residential halls of the University of Dhaka were particularly targeted. The only Hindu residential hall – the Jagannath Hall – was destroyed by the Pakistani armed forces, and an estimated 600 to 700 of its residents were murdered.

The student halls of residence at Dhaka University were raided and numerous students residing there were brutally killed. They also killed many teachers of Dhaka University.

The destroyed everything on their way:

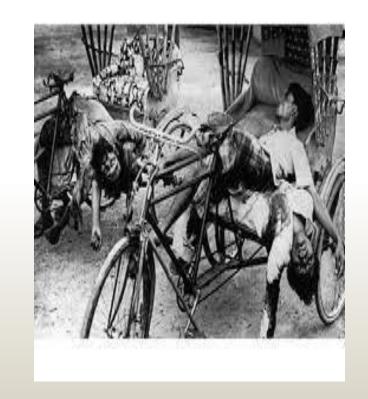
The military forces killed everybody in sight on the footpath and destroyed everything on their way. The tanks roared through the streets of Dhaka blasting indiscriminately at the people and official and residential buildings.

They gunned down clusters of settlements and set fire on them.



Targeted Hindu community:

The Hindu concentrated areas of old Dhaka were particularly targeted. They started killing the people, burnt their houses, looted their valuables and raped their women.



 According to the plan for operation Search Light two headquarters were established.

- Major General Rao Farman Ali with 57 Brigade under Brigadier Arbab was responsible for operation in Dhaka city and its suburbs.
- Major General Khadim Raja was given the responsibility of the rest of the province. Lieutenant General Tikka Khan assumed the overall charge of the operation.



- Operation Searchlight led to the massacre of 30,000 Bengalis in a week. Almost half of the population of Dhaka fled the city in search for safe shelters elsewhere.
- Operation search light designed to exterminate nationalist tendencies. But it gave rise to the birth of the new nation of Bangladesh.



SIMON DRING: A FRIEND OF BANGLADESH

- Rulers wanted to avoid international attention.
- All foreign journalists were deported and radio operations were shut down to prevent any sort of communication.
- A journalist named Simon John Dring stayed secretly and disseminated information to the world about the genocide and the Liberation War that lasted 9 months.
- The genocide that was perpetrated on the unarmed people was flashed in the world press.



Simon Dring

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

☐ Moments after the crackdown began, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence at 12:30 a.m., 26 March. His declaration was transmitted through wireless to every place in the country. He said,

"This may be my last message; from this day onward Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your struggle must go on until the last soldier of the Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh. Final victory is ours."

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

- □On 26 March 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was arrested from his Dhanmondi residence at 1:30 a.m.
- On the same day (26th March 1971), the General Secretary of Chittagong Awami League, Mr. M. A. Hannan read that declaration of the independence of Bangladesh (in Bengali) from the Kalurghat Radio Station, Chittagong twice at 2.10 pm and 2.30 pm.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

□Later Major Ziaur Rahman announced Bangladesh's independence on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from Kalurghat radio station at Chittagong on 27th March'1971.

REFERENCES

- Willem van Schendel (2009). A History of Bangladesh [Cambridge University Press]
- MARCH 2, 1971: First flag flies
- Genocide, 1971 Banglapedia
- Non-Cooperation Movement, 1971 Banglapedia
- British journalist Simon Dring, a true friend of Bangladesh, passes away | News
 Flash
- Final PDF Historic 7th March Speech Embajada de Bangladesh
- Operation Searchlight Banglapedia
- https://bffwt.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bffwt.portal.gov.bd/page/e
 2b55969 0e0c 4337 bb4e ddcc801df7db/History%20of%20Bangladesh.docx
- <u>FinalDeclarationBSMR.pdf</u>
- Bangabandhu's declaration and the beginnings of a new dawn

