

Webinar on

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: an Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation

28 August 2021

Organized by



Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)



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Webinar on

Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) organized a Webinar on '**Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation**' on 28 August 2021. **H E Dr A K Abdul Momen, MP**, Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh graced the Webinar as the Chief Guest. **H E Dr Shamsul Alam**, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was the Special Guest at the event. **Ambassador M Fazlul Karim, Chairman**, BIISS Chaired the Webinar, while **Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te**, Director General, BIISS delivered the welcome address. Since the beginning of 2020, BIISS undertook a number of initiatives and programmes on the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. As a part of this venture, BIISS organized a series of seminars and webinars throughout the year. This book is the compilation of revised and edited versions of the papers presented at those seminars and webinars. Hon'ble Foreign Minister, the Chief Guest of the Webinar, launched a book published by BIISS on Bangabandhu titled 'Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation' in the Webinar. The Webinar was attended by senior officials from the Government of Bangladesh, representatives from different foreign missions, former ambassadors, business personalities, members of all academia, researchers, faculties of various universities, and media representatives.



Opening Remarks by the Chair



Ambassador M Fazlul Karim

Chairman, BISS

Ambassador M Fazlul Karim, Chairman, BISS' commenced his speech by extending a warm welcome to the Chief Guest, Special Guest, distinguished speakers, and audiences. He delivered his profound respect to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who along with his family members was brutally assassinated in August, 1975. He also paid homage to the martyrs of the War of Liberation of 1971. He stated that Bangabandhu was murdered but his ideals and principles remain shining guidelines for achieving country's national development efforts as well as foreign policy goals.

Ambassador Karim remarked that BISS is holding the Webinar at a historic moment of the nation when Bangladesh is celebrating 50 years of its independence and the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation. He opined that Bangladesh and Bangabandhu are indeed, inseparable. It was Bangabandhu who first called for freedom and emancipation of the Bangalees from the clutches of domination and oppression of the Pakistani rulers. He not only just taught the people how to dream about independence but also showed ways to realize it against all odds. He led the nation from the front and accepted immeasurable troubles and sufferings from all sides. His charismatic leadership mesmerized the Bangalees and prepared the general masses, especially the youth to fight for the liberation of their motherland and make supreme sacrifices. Under his visionary guidance, a free nation has been emerged.

Ambassador Karim added that the journey towards independence, however, was never smooth for Bangabandhu and the people of Bangladesh. Bangabandhu spent a quarter of his 55 years of life in prison in his quest for people's emancipation. He did not for once think of his personal safety or comfort, he was always concerned about the wellbeing of the general masses. For him, politics was just a means to serve the people of the country.

Ambassador Karim highlighted that Bangabandhu was at the forefront of every major event leading to the War of Liberation in 1971, including the Language Movement in 1952, the elections of 1954 and 1958,

Movement against Martial Law, the Six-point Movement in 1966, Mass Uprising of 1969, and the General Election of 1970. Despite being in captivity, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman joined the Language Movement with a hunger strike. In a statement released from the jail, he expressed his deepest sorrow for the language martyrs. During his visit to China in 1952 in order to attend the World Peace Conference, Bangabandhu delivered a resounding speech in Bangla, taking the cause of the mother language movement to the global audience. In the 1954 provincial election, the young General Secretary of Awami League won his first election and never lost any election as long as he lived. Being a true son of the soil, Bangabandhu, through his exceptional organizational capability and aptitude was able to read the minds of the people, galvanized the general masses.

Ambassador Karim added that the historic Six-point programme of 1966, considered as the 'Charter of Freedom of the Bengali Nation' was presented by Bangabandhu, unnerved the ruling Pakistan military junta. It was a veiled yet unmistakable roadmap for the independence of the Bangalees. Within three months of the declaration of the Six-point proposal, Bangabandhu was arrested and remained imprisoned for nearly three years. Bangabandhu's arrest sparked nation-wide protests and strikes which made clear the demands of the Bangalees as well as their wholehearted support for Bangabandhu. Since then, the drive towards the emancipation of the Bangalee nation was thus started. The 1968 Agartala Conspiracy Case resulted in a nationwide student movement and mass upsurge demanding the withdrawal of the case and the release of Bangabandhu. Upon his release from prison on 22 February 1969; the people of Bangladesh bestowed Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with the title 'Bangabandhu'. The very next day, Bangabandhu declared that the then East Pakistan would be called 'Bangladesh'. People quickly grasped Bangabandhu's earnestness for the country's independence and rallied behind him. Bangabandhu's unconditional love and affection for the country and its people was reciprocated by the masses in the general election of 1970, giving his party absolute majority, providing Bangabandhu the mandate to work for their emancipation.

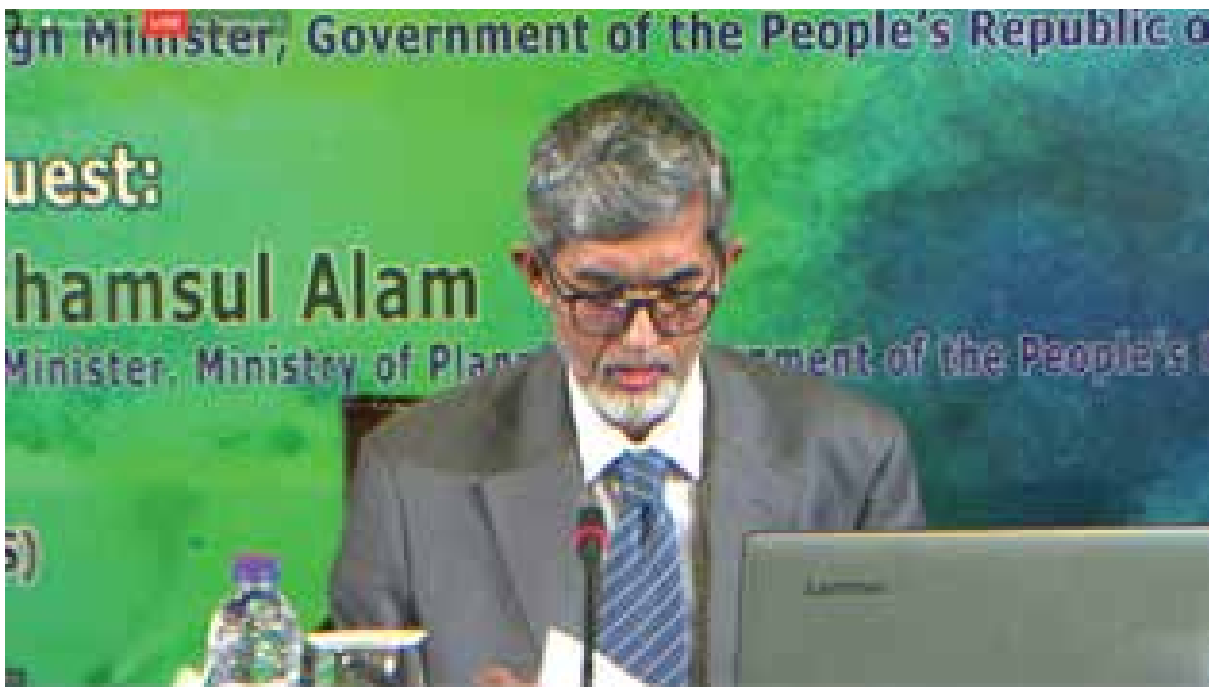
Ambassador Karim then referred to the suspension of the session of National Assembly on 1st March 1971 which inflamed the Bangalees and instantaneously resulted in massive demonstrations throughout the country. Bangabandhu's historic 7th March speech was the real declaration of independence. He called on his fellow countrymen to take all-out preparations to fight for independence. He unwaveringly announced, "Bear in mind since we have given blood, we will give more. If Allah wills, we will surely liberate the people of this country...The struggle this time is the struggle for our emancipation. The struggle this time is the struggle for our independence..." Ambassador Karim opined that the 7th March address is not only the greatest speech in the Bangla language, it is one of the most poignant and powerful speeches in the history of the world and has duly been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This speech continues to inspire freedom-loving people around the globe.

Ambassador Karim stated that following the genocide of 25 March 1971, Bangabandhu formally proclaimed the independence of Bangladesh in the early hours of 26 March 1971, and the War of Liberation had literally begun thereafter. Every citizen of the country responded to the call of Bangabandhu, "This may be my last message, from today 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."

Ambassador Karim remarked that after the nation's independence, Bangabandhu bravely faced insurmountable challenges of rebuilding the infrastructure, resettling the huge number of refugees and internally displaced persons, resuscitating the war-ravaged economy, and gaining international support. His prudent policies helped the economy stabilize during the early years and laid solid foundations for faster-paced future growth. He had the constitution drafted in record time and garnered recognition for the new country from 126 states. His ideas, thoughts, and visions helped the nation achieve a respectable place among the family of nations very soon.

According to Ambassador Karim, Bangladesh was born at the height of the Cold War and intense bloc-politics in the international arena. Bangabandhu wanted to avoid getting sucked into the ideological rivalry by all means as he wished to focus attention on economic development activities. He, however, knew it well that he could not remain isolated from what was happening around the world as he commented in his Unfinished Memoirs, "As a man, what concerns mankind concerns me." He espoused a very pragmatic policy of friendship with all the countries of the world and decided to join the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) so that a neutral foreign policy could be pursued. As has been demonstrated in his speeches in the international forums, Bangabandhu was firm in his opposition to colonialism, racism, and imperialism and supported the freedom struggles of peoples across the world, especially in South Africa and Palestine. Bangabandhu was always with the oppressed people of the world. As he travelled around the globe, he met with the leaders of both the developed and developing nations and transmitted the messages of peace, mutual respect, and shared prosperity.

Ambassador Karim opined that Bangabandhu's statesmanship earned him global accolades as the World Peace Council honoured him with the Joliot-Curie Medal of Peace in 1973 for his extraordinary contribution to the causes of peace in the world and the oppressed people. Bangabandhu had a towering personality and the best compliment was perhaps paid by Fidel Castro of Cuba as he remarked, "I have not seen the Himalayas. But I have seen Sheikh Mujib. In personality and in courage, this man is the Himalayas. I have thus had the experience of witnessing the Himalayas."



Welcome Address



Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te
Director General, BISS

Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te, Director General, BISS, welcomed everyone to the Webinar and expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Dr A K Abdul Momen MP, Hon'ble Foreign Minister and Dr Shamsul Alam, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Planning, for gracing the event. At the beginning of his address, he paid homage to the memory of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members who were martyred in the gruesome night of the 15 August 1975. Also, he expressed his deepest respect for the millions who sacrificed their lives and limbs for liberation.

In his remarks, General Bari informed that in the Mujib Centenary, the primary research theme of BISS was selected to be 'Bangabandhu and Bangladesh'. Indeed, Bangabandhu and Bangladesh are inseparable. The long history of the emancipation of Bangladesh is deeply rooted in the politics and policies of the periods preceding the Liberation Movement in 1971. He added that the divisive British colonial rule, transitions from colonial to post-colonial, and then to the neo-colonial setup under the Pakistani federal system and the decades of internal schism in Pakistan had implications on the international relations and diplomatic endeavors that would be chosen by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for Bangladesh's liberation. In the turbulent time of the Cold War, neither anyone could raise a loud voice against internal imperialism, nor did anybody have the appetite to hear that sort of domination. In fact, until 1971, none succeeded in challenging the authority of the state. Sheikh Mujib was the first post-colonial leader who successfully led his people to independence. The transformation of Sheikh Mujib to Bangabandhu and the priming of an oppressed nation toward emancipation are congruously the same story.

While discussing Bangabandhu's philosophy, General Bari stated that Bangabandhu was an unrivalled leader of the oppressed. As an iconic leader of Bangladesh's national struggle for liberation, Bangabandhu's worldview as well as philosophical understanding were based upon his experience from the brutal, oppressive, and discriminatory colonial rule of the British Empire and later, the then Pakistan. Bangabandhu's struggle to establish democracy can be equated with his identification with a vast number of people who were economically and politically marginalized. And, this view of him in no way envisaged his own people only, but included the entire humanity, as it was evident from his famous assertion, "The world is now divided into

two—the oppressors and the oppressed — and I am with the oppressed.” In a world that was polarized by the Cold War, Bangabandhu wanted to maintain neutrality, equidistance, and peaceful coexistence. His ideological orientation and indomitable commitment to world peace made him part of the core leadership within the NAM movement. He added that to achieve peace for Bangladesh and the whole of humanity, Bangabandhu believed in multilateralism, rule of law, and international cooperation. Hence, the guiding principles of Bangladesh’s foreign policy testify how they have their roots entrenched in Bangabandhu’s philosophical vision.



General Bari also shed light on different aspects of Bangabandhu’s foreign policy. The foreign policy priorities, choices, and decisions made by Bangabandhu, and the way he projected Bangladesh’s national interest in the international forums, clearly demonstrate a transformational leadership. Bangabandhu was keen to address the long-term challenges by identifying the national priorities and also making long-term and high-impact foreign policy legacies rather than short-term ones. Similarly, in raising a phoenix out of the ashes during the post-independence reconstruction phase, Bangabandhu did not focus merely on the damage-repair, rather, he had his eyes fixed on the distant horizon and envisioned the gamut of the journey in its entirety. He pointed out that the first and foremost measure Bangabandhu adopted was to bring back the millions of refugees and resettle them in independent Bangladesh. Then, he ensured internal and external security through the withdrawal of troops from Bangladesh within a very short period and professionalizing own law and order forces.

General Bari then briefly elaborated on Bangabandhu’s development efforts. On the macroeconomic front, construction and rehabilitation were prioritized with a special focus on making basic amenities available for the people in need. Urgent initiatives were undertaken for the infrastructural rebuilding of the key sectors like transport, power, and agriculture which incurred severe loss and damage during the war. Bangabandhu also took a special initiative to launch Bangladesh’s First Five Year Plan. He added that due to the efforts of Bangabandhu, the country was able to adopt a full-fledged constitution embedded with basic principles of state policy just in 325 days of the country’s liberation.

General Bari opined that Bangladesh was fortunate to have had a leader like Bangabandhu with timeless leadership qualities that are equally relevant today. It was a great misfortune to have lost him untimely. He added that Mujib Centenary has inspired the people with the opportunity during which BISS has undertaken several initiatives including the conduct of a series of seminars and webinars. Besides, BISS compiled a book, titled Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation, which is also the title of this Webinar because it includes the book-launching ceremony at the end.

Finally, General Bari invited all to visit the newly established Bangabandhu Corner in BISS Library. Before concluding his speech, he welcomed everyone to this auspicious occasion and expressed his hearty gratitude for gracing it with their presence.



Paper Presentations



Professor Dr Syed Anwar Husain

Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)

Professor Dr Syed Anwar Husain, Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), presented a paper on “Bangabandhu, Bangladesh and Bangali Emancipation”. While highlighting the history of Bengal’s independence, Professor Husain said that the genesis of Bangladesh as an independent entity stretches back to at least the 6th century, when Sasanka had established the independent kingdom of Gaur in 594 A.D., by repudiating the foreign Gupta rule over Bengal. Sasanka was a Bangali, and his kingdom was the first independent Bangali entity in recorded history. The next episode of Bengal’s independence was provided by the Pala rule (750-1161). The Palas were sons of the soil, and their empire had a niche in the subcontinental history as being the most revered and even feared. The Muslim rule of the independent sultans (1336-1576) was the next phase of Bengal’s independence. The Muslim rulers were, however, outsiders who had their own compulsions to keep their realm administratively and economically independent of Delhi Sultanate’s control. But, Bangali people were not independent; nevertheless, they did have their status as being the denizens of an independent kingdom. Thus, from the ancient through the medieval times, Bengal had spells of independence many a time, administrative and otherwise. Monarchy, being the prevailing mode of administration, people had little or nothing to do with this sort of administration.

Professor Husain further added that the first-ever political entity with people’s voice and participation in it was Bangladesh (1971), and the architect of which was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The state of Pakistan, to which Eastern Bengal was tugged as East Pakistan for 24 years 4 months and 3 days (1947-1971), was a period of domination and discrimination. This was; however, a period of gestation of Bangali urge for self-assertion, and during which Bangabandhu was the prime leader of people calling the shots. The leader-people nexus was such that people bestowed upon him the epithets of Bangabandhu and the Father of Nation. During the 1,314 days, he was at the helm of affairs following independence and up to the assassination, Bangabandhu, despite circumstantial odds, did try his utmost to repay people’s debt by delivering the expected goods of independence. A people-centric leader as he was, Bangabandhu’s deeds for Bangladesh were divided into two phases: pre-and post-BaKSAL. The former phase, although not without evidential slips, did witness successes enough to put a totally devastated country on the sure road of recovery



and progress. The latter phase was an unfinished one as Bangabandhu's lifespan was rendered unfinished (55 years 4 months and 3 days) by the self-confessed killers.

Professor Husain then talked about Bangabandhu's role in the making of Bangladesh. According to him, Bangabandhu and Bangladesh are historically and epistemologically synonymous. Personally Bangabandhu was not only the seer, but also the creator, of course, with people's input, of the Bangladesh project. The independence of Bangladesh, in its origin and evolution, was egged on by his personal political-philosophical cogitation. In 1974, he was reported to have confided in the eminent litterateur Annadashankar Roy that he had conceived the idea of an independent Bangladesh state as far back as 1947; and there are ample historical pieces of evidence to substantiate such a claim.

In 1960, Bangabandhu joined hands with some progressive youths to float the Swadhin Bangla Biplabi Parishad (Independent Bengal Revolutionary Council). A secret and apparently socio-cultural body, its very name suggested a political agenda. Spread throughout the province, some carefully selected youths were imbued with the idea of independence. A note is to be added here that, while engaging himself in such furtive adventurous deeds, Bangabandhu had been serving as the Awami League General Secretary (1953-1966). It is understandable that the Awami League, although a Bangali-oriented party, Bangabandhu appeared to have a deficit in his satisfaction of the party agenda insofar as Bangali emancipation was concerned; and, hence is explained his personal adventurous bids. He would continue in this line of action until independence was achieved.

In 1961, Bangabandhu was a catalyzer for two such secret bids. To craft a consensus vis-a-vis the question of independence, he sought to reach across to the leftist political parties. Facilitated by Manik Mia, there was a secret meeting with comrades Khoka Roy and Moni Singh, wherein Bangabandhu sought their assistance in the bid for independence. While seeing eye to eye with the proposition, both the comrades advised caution for being secretive, as any public disclosure would bring in anti-Bangali dictator Ayub's wrath. Both sides, however, agreed to concert their movements to reach the ultimate goal of independence.

The second bid was to launch his entirely personal Purbavanga Mukti Front (East Bengal Liberation Front). A leaflet drafted in English by himself was printed at his own cost. The leaflet was delivered mostly by himself to foreign missions located in Dhaka, riding his own bicycle. The object was to sensitize the foreign missions about grievances and goals of the Bangali people.

Professor Husain said that there is contradictory evidence about the year of the secret trip to Agartala, and he prefers to be noncontroversial by citing the years 1962-63. Bangabandhu's Agartala mission had the aim of going to London with Indian help for starting his movement in exile from there. It is understandable that for such a political strategy, Bangabandhu had taken his cue from that of Subhas Chandra Bose, who had enlisted support and assistance of Germany and Japan to end of British rule in India. But, in the wake of the humiliating Sino-Indian War, Prime Minister Nehru shrugged off any such secret move to help Bangabandhu's genuine but ambitious plan; and, Bangabandhu returned home empty-handed. Apparently, a failure, this mission was, however, indicative of Bangabandhu's intensity of purpose and for the achievement of which he even hazarded his personal safety.

The next way station towards independence was the Six-point programme and the rousing movement issuing therefrom. Dubbed the charter of emancipation, the programme initially sketched out a plan for political emancipation, and socio-economic emancipation would wait until independence was achieved. Inhering in the programme was the political, economic, and military autonomy of the then East Pakistan as had been adumbrated in the Lahore Resolution (23 March 1940).

The Ayub regime retorted to the Six-point demand by foisting upon Bangabandhu and 34 other pro-Bangali civil and military persons regarding the Agartala Conspiracy Case (Bangabandhu called 'Islamabad Conspiracy Case'). The youth movement, called the 1969 Mass Uprising, was mounted to confront the trial of Bangabandhu and others under this case. The slogans raised by the youth as the uprising gathered stridency showed the extent and depth of public support for the demand for independence. Under the sheer weight of popular movement, the Ayub regime retracted; the case was withdrawn on 22 February, Bangabandhu, along with other accused, were released. This episode demonstrated the strength of people's power against even a military dictatorial regime. This was also a portent of the things to come vis-a-vis the run-off towards independence. Moreover, this was a litmus test of leadership for Bangabandhu, which he got through successfully, as, on the following day after his release, a public reception at the then Race Course bestowed upon him the epithet of Bangabandhu. Indeed, the Six-point movement and the conspiracy case skyrocketed Bangabandhu's popularity and catapulted him to the position of the sole Bangali spokesman.

On 5th December 1969, at the memorial meeting on the sixth death anniversary of Suhrawardy, Bangabandhu named East Pakistan—Bangladesh. This declaration was certainly inching forward to the cause of independent Bangladesh.

The 1970 general elections were about to be boycotted as many senior Awami League leaders were averse to participating in meaningless elections because of the restrictions that had been imposed by Yahya Khan's (the General who had replaced Ayub Khan on 25 March 1969) Legal Framework Order (LFO). This document sought to tie the hands of Bangabandhu in a way that he would not be able to recast the constitution as per the Six points. But, Bangabandhu let it be known that his party would surely take part in the elections and fumed, "My goal is the independence of Bangladesh. Once the elections are over, I shall tear the LFO into shreds. Who can then challenge me". This statement originated out of his immense self-confidence that he and his party would win the elections. History thereafter substantiated this self-confidence and rare farsightedness of Bangabandhu.

In the National Assembly, the Awami League bagged 167 out of allotted 169 seats; in the provincial assembly, 288 out of 300 seats. Thus, the party garnered a landslide victory, and the architect of which was charismatic Bangabandhu himself. But the winning party was denied the expected political space through the machinations of the triumvirate comprising Yahya, the military and over-ambitious Bhutto. Even the National Assembly, scheduled to begin its session in Dhaka on 03 March, was postponed without giving a new date. The Bangali people, led by Bangabandhu, reacted by mounting the unprecedented non-cooperation movement, thus, creating the tumultuous March days (1-25), which, in fact, were the distant thunder for the Pakistan military junta.

The tumultuous March days were marked by a number of milestone-like events as Bangladesh neared independence. First, on the 02 March 1971, the Swadhin Bangla Chhatra Sangram Parishad hoisted the green-red-golden flag of the would-be independent country atop the Arts Building of the University of Dhaka. Second, on 3rd March, the same group of youths, at their Paltan rally, proclaimed the manifesto of independence, wherein Bangabandhu was declared to be the supreme leader of the Bangladesh movement. In other words, he was accorded the position of the Father of the Nation. Third, Bangabandhu's decisive speech of the 07 March 1971 gave an equivocal call for independence through a people's war fought with guerilla tactics. Fourth, there were Mujib-Yahya parleys, joined later by Bhutto, between 16 and 24 March. Bangabandhu's intent on joining the parleys was to get across the message that he had hoped for a political solution to the political impasse. Yahya plus Bhutto had a different bent of mind; they were dilly-dallying to buy time to complete military preparations for the eventual military assault on the people. The philosophical basis for a military solution to political crisis had been decided as far back as February 1971, when Yahya, in a meeting of generals, was reported to have roared, 'Kill three million of them [Bangalis], the rest will eat out of our hands'. It appears that by 25 March, military preparations had been complete for launching the Operation Searchlight; thus, having given a green signal for the operation, Yahya eased himself out of Dhaka in the evening of the 25 March. Bhutto did the same thing the following morning with the self-congratulatory words, 'Thank God, Pakistan has been saved.' He would soon realize that, in fact, this was the beginning of the death-throes of Pakistan.

In his interview with David Frost (18 January 1972), Bangabandhu divulged that he would have liked the Pakistan side to attack first, and then the people would be in a war in self-defence. This was exactly how things happened following the launching of Operation Searchlight by about 11 pm. Moreover, he had now ample reasons for making a formal declaration of independence. As it was, by 12:20 am, Bangabandhu recorded his declaration, which began with the words, "This may be my last message. From today, Bangladesh is independent". By 1:30 am, he was arrested and later transported to Pakistan, where he had to pass 290 days of solitary imprisonment. Death was staring at him.

As Bangabandhu was in incarceration, Bangladesh confronted the Pakistan occupation forces. As per the directives contained in the 7th March speech, the people, especially the freedom fighters, waged a people's guerilla war. The resultant Liberation War of 8 months and 21 days (not 9 months) was the shortest of such wars in history. Although physically away in Pakistani captivity, Bangabandhu remained the guiding spirit and beacon light as his people trudged along the uphill path of war. This kind of non-physical and entirely spiritual leadership is perhaps a rarity in the annals of leadership. The war was fought to success. In this asymmetric war, Bangladesh was the weaker side; but despite that, the occupation forces capitulated and surrendered humiliatingly on 16 December 1971. Once again, the enormous might of people's power prevailed over the marauding military juggernaut. Indeed, Bangladesh is the gift of a nexus between leadership and people's power.

Professor Husain then talked about the role of Bangabandhu in people's emancipation in Bangladesh. He said that it was sheer providence plus international pressure to save Bangabandhu's life, in the lead of which was the Indian Premier Indira Gandhi, that Bangabandhu could come back alive (if not fully well) to Bangladesh in the afternoon of 10 January 1972. On the homecoming of Bangabandhu, The Guardian made the most pertinent comment: "As soon as Sheikh Mujib walks out of the Dhaka airport, the Republic of Bangladesh becomes a reality." Indeed, without Bangabandhu, the existence of Bangladesh would have been at stake; that was how people thought as well as the international media. Equally salient was the cover-page comment of the weekly Time, "Bangladesh from Jail to Power", and there was a full-page bust-size picture of Bangabandhu on the cover page. It is worth noting that Bangabandhu was equated with Bangladesh, and rightly so.

Once in Bangladesh, Bangabandhu had to start almost from zero to build a Bangladesh, a country which had emerged with Henry Kissinger's prognostication that the same would be a bottomless basket. In a 1976 publication, Just Faaland and J R Parkinson (Bangladesh: The Test Case for Development) also forecast a bleak future of Bangladesh. But to the surprise of international development pundits, Bangladesh's economy during the lifetime of Bangabandhu grew at the average rate of 7 per cent.

In his homecoming address, Bangabandhu gave out ample indications as to how he would go about the arduous task of rebuilding the country. One such major indication was that Bangladesh will be an ideal state; and the basis of which will not be any religion. The basis of the state will be democracy, socialism and secularism (nationalism was added at the time of writing the constitution). The people were exhorted to wage 'a struggle for emancipation'. On 14 March 1972, in a speech, Bangabandhu raised the slogan: 'This time the struggle is for building the country.'

Bangabandhu's vision for an exploitation-free 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal) was succinctly put forward in his Rajshahi address of 9 May 1972. He said, "What do I want? I want the people of Bangla to get two square meals a day. What do I want? I want the jobless to get job. What do I want? I want the people of my Bengal become happy. What do I want? I want that my people move about in a jolly mood. What do I want? I want the people of Bangla smile again to their heart's content."

Bangabandhu had, in total 1,314 days, to serve the country, which was divided into two phases: pre-BaKSAL (10 January 1972 – 24 January 1975), and post-BaKSAL (233) days. During the first phase, the trend was to reconstruct Bangladesh with whatever was available, administrative and otherwise. There was, in fact, no time to improvise everything new; the imperative was first to bring back the totally devastated country to at least a running position. Consequently, mostly the Pakistani personnel and machine hurtled along in the new Bangladesh. The experience which Bangabandhu gathered during this phase had been a mixed one. Indeed, the turnaround by the BaKSAL was an inevitable consequence of what had happened during the first phase. Bangabandhu himself characterized the new system as the democracy of the oppressed in a socialist matrix. The BaKSAL had all the potentialities to effect a revolutionary turnaround for Bangladesh. Bangabandhu himself dubbed the BaKSAL the 'Second Revolution', meaning 1971 to be the first. But, it is humbly suggested that as per definition and implied meaning of the construct of revolution, 1971 defies revolution, and the BaKSAL was the first-ever and only revolutionary move in Bangladesh; which, however, remained unfinished like its author's unfinished life.

To sum up, Professor Husain said that Bangabandhu was a political leader per se, but certainly not a litteratur of any sort; although he had a good knowledge of world literature. Bangabandhu did write a poem conceiving the state of the country. While handing the poem to his confidant Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury sometime in 1973, Bangabandhu ridiculed himself by saying, 'If it is not a kabita, it is at least a gobita.' Rendered into English, Bangabandhu's gobita reads as follows:

My poem wails in silence and isolation
the gentlemen of Bengal steal
and cheat people by ensnaring
them in trap.
I would like to rush red horse after them
[but] feel pain in chest
Have we earned independence
for the country to be looted like this?



Dr Atiur Rahman

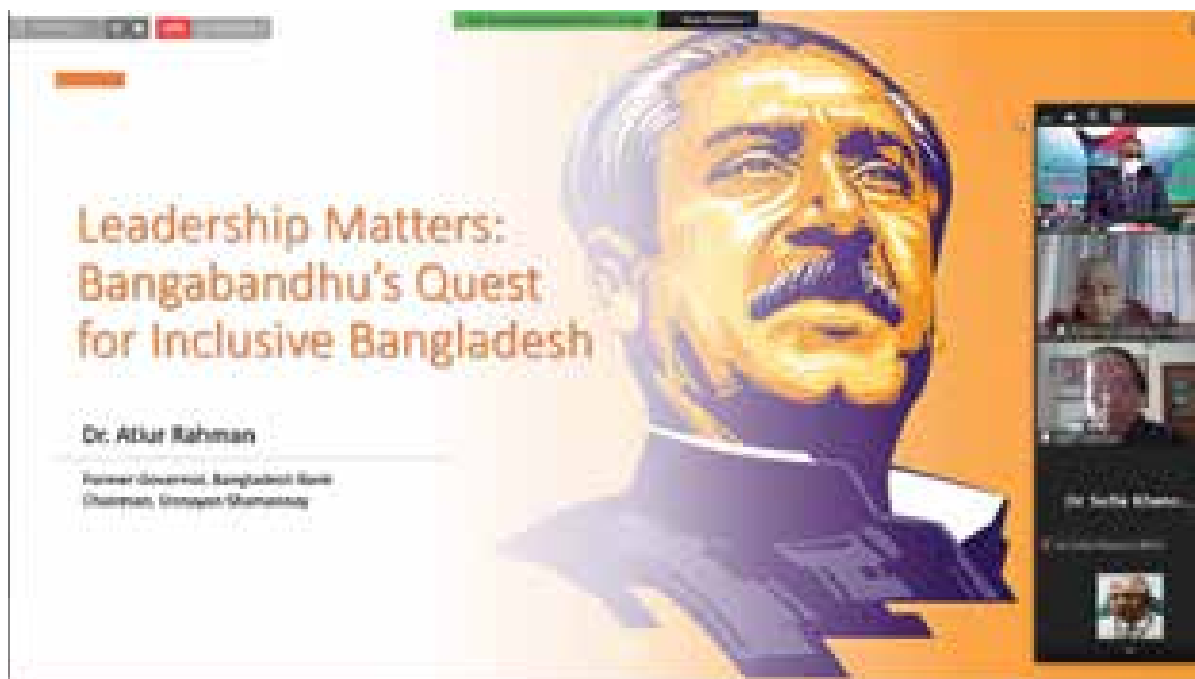
Bangabandhu Chair Professor, University of Dhaka

Dr Atiur Rahman, Bangabandhu Chair Professor, University of Dhaka, started his speech by paying homage to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was assassinated on 15 August 1975 and expressed the deepest respect to the memory of all the martyrs of that fateful night. He paid tribute to the four national leaders and all the martyrs of the War of Liberation. He also expressed respect for those who were killed on the 21 August 2004. He congratulated BISS for organizing this Webinar as well as for publishing the book “Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation.”

In his presentation titled “Leadership Matters: Bangabandhu's Quest for Inclusive Bangladesh”, Dr Atiur Rahman focused on Bangabandhu's exceptional leadership and his quest for inclusive development of Bangladesh. He commented that Bangabandhu is the namesake of Bangladesh. According to Dr. Rahman, the formation of the state of Pakistan was a false dawn for Bangabandhu. Yet, he accepted the reality and started his movement for the concept of Bangladesh. From the very first day, he landed in this part of Pakistan, he defined all the challenges of the Cold War situation and emphasized the impracticality of the state called Pakistan. He continued his journey and gradually emerged as the most successful leader in this part of the world. He was aesthetic, transformational, pragmatic, and also compassionate.

Dr Rahman described how Bangabandhu attained a number of great achievements during his very short tenure of three and a half years. He transformed a provincial government into a central government. He created all the institutions including the central bank within a short period of time and led the country to a very prosperous journey, which was stopped in 1975. Dr. Atiur Rahman described Bangabandhu as a leader who is pro-growth, pro-agenda, pro-environment, pro-peace, and has a global outlook.

Dr Rahman quoted professor James Manor who said that Bangabandhu stood out among many other leaders who are also fathers of their nations. Professor Manor mentioned three reasons for such a comment. First, he was truly a secular leader, not an ethnic nationalist. He dropped the word Muslim from the name of his party to make it a secular party—a party who later led the War of Liberation. Second, he was a man of organization. He always believed in organization and emphasized building organization at the grassroots level. As a leader, he always cared for his followers and they respected him as a compassionate leader. Third, he was also very flexible. As Professor Hussain has previously indicated, he was always open to dialogues and negotiation. Even in the worst of circumstances, he did not act as a hot-headed agitator as some people would like to put him. After the 07 March 1971, there was hardly any scope for negotiation with Pakistan. Still, he was very open to President Yahia Khan and negotiated with them to give the world a chance to understand that he was at the receiving end.



According to Dr Atiur Rahman, that kind of leadership helped Bangabandhu to become the most legitimate spokesman for the Bengali people. He was riding on the popularity among the Bengalis, who voted for him and gave him an overwhelming majority in the 1970 election. He told that if even one of the members of the Constitution Assembly or the National Assembly differs, he would take care of the differing views. He was such a born democrat.

Dr Rahman stated that Bangabandhu's movement for Bangladesh started from a very early stage. He added that the great leader always cared for the people and ordinary people were at the centre of his journey for independence. His politics was focused on realizing the rights of the marginalized. When he came back from Calcutta and started the language movement, he said that this was not a movement for language only it was a question of life and death for the Bengali people, their struggle for education; and a question of accommodation and rights.

Another example of Bangabandhu's pragmatism, as Dr Rahman mentioned was his initiative for the poor farmers who used to work for the rich farmers and could not collect the wages in paddies. Bangabandhu really went out for them to realize their due payments but in so doing, he would first ask for it and would always try to negotiate it before starting a movement. He led political movements to realize the rights. Only when the political movements were failed by the conspirators, he started leading the struggle for independence with arms.

To Dr Atiur Rahman, the supreme goal of Bangabandhu's war of liberation and his entire lifetime movement was to achieve a society without exploitation in the end. This was the core of his development philosophy and that's why Dr. Rahman viewed inclusive development as Bangabandhu's biggest goal on 15 December 1971. Therefore, the great leader declared, the independence of Bangladesh would be meaningful to him only when the woes of the farmers' labourers and the deprived Bangladeshi people are addressed.

Dr Rahman drew attention to the fact that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman started rebuilding Bangladesh, simply standing on the ashes. He had to reconstruct the war-torn infrastructure without any resources in hand, rehabilitate 10 million refugees, and construct about 2 million houses for the internally displaced people. Moreover, he had to re-haul the regulatory institutions including the central bank. He established Planning Commission and initiated the Five Year Plan. While taking a long-term approach to development, he had to cope with the natural calamities and adverse geopolitical climate.

Dr Atiur Rahman highlighted that Bangabandhu had to start his journey from zero. At the time of independence, the size of Bangladesh economy was only a billion-dollar which is now the size of 350 plus billion dollars. At that time, there was not even a single dollar in that foreign exchange reserves, the savings to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio was only 3 per cent and the investment to GDP ratio was only 9 per cent. And, at present, the investment GDP ratio is more than 32 per cent, the savings GDP ratio is around 31 percent and the foreign exchange reserve is about US\$48 billion. Dr. Rahman stressed that this tremendous transformation was made possible only because of the strong leadership roles of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his daughter Sheikh Hasina.

Dr Atiur Rahman added that one of the strong foundations laid by Bangabandhu for Bangladesh was his constitution. He commented that not many constitutions in the world would have so many developmental issues imprinted in them. He then spoke on the pillars of the constitution. He expressed the view that in the first pillar—nationalism the identity of the nation, the Bengali identity, and the self-respect as being Bengalis were highlighted. The second pillar, socialism, implied an equitable society with local realities in mind. The third pillar democracy emphasized on the parliamentary system to ensure people's participation. But, according to Dr. Rahman, the most decisive one is secularism which involves combating communal forces and maintaining social peace. He then mentioned the assertion of a Nobel laureate professor who highly spoke of Bangabandhu's interpretation of secularism – 'you have all the freedom of religion but you cannot use the religion for politics'. The professor said that this interpretation of secularism is so needed even in today's



world where so many countries are falling victims to fundamentalism and other religious based problems that are now prevalent in the geopolitics of the region.

Dr Atiur Rahman then highlighted the three most important policies of Bangabandhu. First is the nationalization of primary education. About 100,000 primary school teachers were employed and 30,000 primary schools were nationalized. Secondly, Bangabandhu emphasized on awareness-raising for family planning. Thirdly, he went for the policy of decentralization and democratic movement from the ground. He went for rural development and the agricultural revolution. Bangabandhu put special emphasis on self-sufficiency in food. He said, it was very humiliating for a leader like him to beg for food, and when there is food aid politics, the country has to become surplus in food.

Emancipation of the workers, including women, was another priority area in Bangabandhu's constitution, adds Dr Rahman. He always prioritized education for the emancipation of the masses, and advocated investing 4 per cent of the GDP per education in 1970. In a pre-election speech, he said that we need at least 4 per cent of the GDP in education, a level which even today the country could not go for. So farsighted the great leader was! He formed the Kudrat-E-Khuda Commission with a view to developing a workforce that was humane, secular, committed, and morally strong. Through education, he also wanted to develop leadership, character, and respect for physical labour. And, he wanted Bangla to be the medium of instruction. Finally, for the great leader, the goal of higher education was to create graduates who would work for an equitable society. Thus, the visionary leader was mending the small roads in order to go to the higher ends of civilization, as said by Dr Rahman.

Dr Rahman further commented that Bangabandhu wanted to walk on two legs for a balanced development—where one leg was agriculture and another leg was industry. The leader could see that the largest portion of the workforce of the newly independent country would be employed in agriculture. He viewed that agriculture would supply raw materials for industries and demand for goods. So, he said that there was no alternative to increased agricultural production in the context of the nasty politics of aid.

Dr Rahman then talked about Bangabandhu's industrialization policy. Initially, after the independence, there was no option other than a state-led development; the state had to take the initial responsibility of industrial operation, because all the entrepreneurs were Pakistanis, and they left suddenly. But Bangabandhu kept windows open for the private sector and also for the cooperatives. The First Five-year Plan emphasized on creating an enabling environment for the private sector. In 1974-75, the ceiling of private investment was raised from BDT 2.5 million to BDT 30 million. Also, 133 abundant industry units were handed over to the private sector. So, Bangabandhu was not against the private sector, he was just waiting and balancing, underscored by Dr Rahman.

Dr Atiur Rahman then mentioned the name of Professor Nurul Islam, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, who thought Bangabandhu was the biggest capital for leading Bangladesh to inclusive development. Dr Islam opined that Bangabandhu's imposing personality was an important factor that kept the power factions in and out of the party in a balanced state immediately after the independence.

Dr Atiur Rahman further said that Bangabandhu was a Global Leader with farsighted foreign policy. He quoted from Bangabandhu's speech at the UN where he said, "we can look forward to a world where human creativity and the great achievements of our age, in science and technology will be able to shape a better future, free from the threat of nuclear war, and based on sharing of technology and resources on a global scale. So that men everywhere can begin to enjoy the minimal conditions of a decent life."

The visionary leadership and farsighted policies of Bangabandhu helped the country to move forward despite resource constraints, as emphasized by Dr Rahman. Starting with a per capita income of only USD 93 at the time of independence, per capita income rose to USD 273 by 1975. After his death, it dropped to USD 138 and then to USD 128 in 1977. It took 13 more years to reach the level of per capita income in 1975. These figures prove the magic of his leadership, said Dr Rahman.

In conclusion, Dr Atiur Rahman identified the traits of Bangabandhu that made him a great leader. Bangabandhu could generate emotions. He could encourage people to struggle for decades. He gave attention to developing core leaders; he mentored those who eventually oversaw the war of liberation. He believed in maximization of engagement. He could reach people from all walks of life in liberating and reconstructing the country. And, he had long-term vision, like his daughter, who is now thinking about 100 years of delta plan. He always dreamt of a prosperous Bangladesh (Sonar Bangla) and emphasized on long-term planning for people-centric transformation of Bangladesh.

Finally, Dr Rahman recited a poem of Shamsur Rahman to pay homage to Bangabandhu, the greatest of the great leaders, not only of Bangladesh but also of the world.

Hail that man on whose name
The sun shines down eternally,
Like a song comes down the rains of Sravan,
Whose name never collects dust.
Hail that man, over whose name the moonlight crane
Spreads its wings,
Hail that man on whose name liberation flutters
Like a flag,
Hail that man whose name echoes in
The victory cries of freedom fighters.

Open Discussion



Ambassador Shamsheer M Chowdhury, Former Foreign Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh, thanked BISS for organizing this timely Webinar. He stated that emancipation was one of the principles of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Emancipation not only refers to the people of Bangladesh but also all the oppressed people of the world. Due to his strong belief in this principle, in January 1975, Bangabandhu led Bangladesh to recognize the provisional revolutionary government of Vietnam even before the forces of North Vietnam had liberated Saigon. He added that this was a defining demonstration of Bangabandhu's principle of supporting any suppressed people.

Air Commodore Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury (Retd)

discussed Bangabandhu's role in building up the military force in Bangladesh. He added that the military force did not have infrastructure and organization set up just after country's liberation like banking and central administration. From day one of independence, Bangabandhu established Army, Naval, and Air forces headquarters and started to equip these forces. He informed that soon after the first visit of Bangabandhu to Moscow, AVM Khandker led a team of senior BAF Officers to Moscow, where they signed a deal for military aid to strengthen Bangladesh Air Force. Under this deal, Bangladesh received a squadron of ten Mig-21MF supersonic, transport aircraft, and helicopter. Besides, nearly four hundred plus officers went to the Soviet Union to get training. Similarly, Bangladesh Navy also got the first modern patrol boat after the visit of Marshal Tito to Bangladesh. He also remarked that Bangabandhu gave strong support to Egypt during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. He has sent a consignment of tea to Egypt and a medical team to Syria as a mark of Bangladesh's support to the Arab cause. In return, Egypt gifted tanks to the Bangladesh Army in November 1974. Hence, while discussing the contribution of Bangabandhu in development, his role in the development of military forces should be highlighted.



Mr Salahud Din Ahmed, Former Member, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), discussed the attitude of Bangabandhu towards the education of the nation. He added that during the tenure of Bangabandhu, thirty thousand plus primary schools were nationalized. Referring to this point, he wanted to know how the same attitude of Bangabandhu can be reflected in the current decision-making of the government related to primary education and its quality.

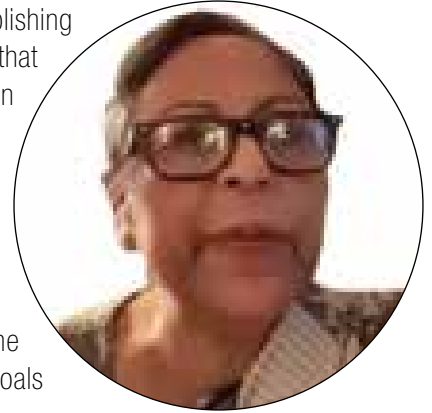
Group Captain Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan, psc, acsc, PhD, Chief of Public Relations, Information and Publication, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Aviation and Aerospace University, discussed his chapter in the book titled, "Bangabandhu and Bangladesh:



An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation". In his chapter, he highlighted the enduring principles of Bangabandhu about foreign policy that have been extracted from his speech in the United Nations General Assembly in 1974. The research found that Bangladesh is the only example of forcibly creating a new state based on the ethno-linguistic movement during the Cold War. It was possible due to the leadership of Bangabandhu. He further added that the voting data of Bangladesh in 1284 resolutions reflect that over the period, the country has consistently remained seized in supporting Bangabandhu's ideals in all thematic categories. It infers that his enduring principles remain alive even today in the question of non-alignment, peaceful co-existence, economic emancipation, and global solidarity. Even, this has become more relevant in the era of Covid-19.



Dr. Humayra Ferdous, Associate Professor and Head-in-Charge, Department of Physics, American International University Bangladesh, emphasized Bangabandhu's contribution to science and research. She added that Bangabandhu founded Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC). The institute is now playing the pioneering role of establishing the first nuclear power plant in Rooppur. She hoped that the people of Bangladesh would realize his contribution in a great manner and uphold his spirit everywhere.



Naaz Farhana, SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurs Council, paid tribute to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. She stated that Bangabandhu's dreams of 'Sonar Bangla' have been realized by her daughter, Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Under her iconic leadership, the country is working to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

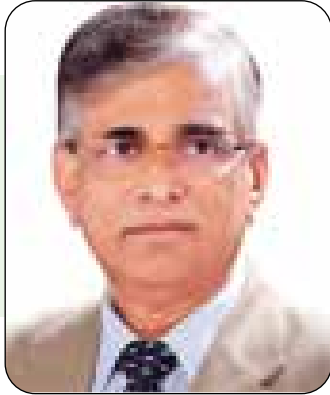


Rear Admiral Khaled Iqbal (retd), Vice Chancellor, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University, paid tribute to Bangabandhu and all the martyrs of 15th August in this month of national mourning. He added that it was an excellent and well-researched learning session on the contribution and vision of the Father of the Nation.

Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat (LPR), former Air Chief, Bangladesh, said that Bangabandhu laid the first brick on the country's way to "Sonar Bangla". Hence, there is a need to take it further under the leadership of his daughter Sheikh Hasina, Honorable Prime Minister. He also added a synergy among the university, the industry, and the military to get a generation of computer literate skilled young people to reap the benefits of country demographic dividend in the coming days.



Address by the Special Guest



H E Dr Shamsul Alam

Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

At the outset of his speech, the Special Guest, **H E Dr Shamsul Alam**, Hon'ble State Minister, Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, expressed his deepest respect to the departed soul of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman along with other Martyrs of 15 August 1975. He extended his sincere homage to the martyrs of the carnage of 21 August 2004 and sought divine blessings for all of the departed souls of the fateful events in the month of August, 1975. He stated that the Webinar organized by BISS was historically contextual with heart-rendering touches. He appreciated the presentations and discussions, which were rich reflecting pertinent stylized facts of Bangabandhu's life, contributions, and attainments. He commented that the commemorations must inspire all to build their own life ideals with the spirit of Bangabandhu's sacrifices and deeds. And, there is a need to transpire the spirit of Bangabandhu's ideals and lifelong contributions for the cause of the masses including peasants, labourers, and citizenry in general.

The Hon'ble State Minister reminded the audience regarding Bangabandhu's insurmountable contributions with a view to creating an independent Bengali nation in the Bengal delta and consolidating the independence in firm hands. He then briefly highlighted the milestone goals and targets that Bangabandhu helped to attain with his magical leadership and charisma during his short period of administration after the emergence of Bangladesh. After Bangabandhu's triumphant homecoming on 10 January 1972, within 20 days of his return, he established Bangladesh Planning Commission on 31 January manning with four leading economists of that time headed by Professor Nurul Islam and having three other renowned economists emphasizing rehabilitation and reviving the economy in soonest possible time. Here, H E Dr Shamsul Alam noted that after the independence, with the premiership of charismatic leader Jawaharlal Nehru, India could establish the Indian Planning Commission in 1951 after almost 4 years of their independence. On the other hand, Pakistan established its Planning Commission in 1953 after 6 years of its independence. Therefore, it reflects how Bangabandhu was desperate to build his own country as soon as possible by following a planned path of growth and created the Planning Commission at the very outset of the independence.

On 16 December 1972, Bangabandhu signed the first constitution that is one of the best in a democratic polity in the world and subsequently held a parliamentary election in 1973. The constitution was framed in less than a year. The Hon'ble State Minister urged all to recognize this venture noting that usually constitution-making takes two-three years to come up with. Besides, Bangabandhu collected arms and ammunition from all the freedom fighters, organized arm forces, police forces, and he then established bureaucracy, and set the administration in the quickest possible time. As the country lacked experienced bureaucratic people at that time, therefore, most of the deputy commissioners were given the assignment of secretaries after returning the government from exile. All these were done when the country was in dearth of appropriately experienced manpower. In addition, Bangabandhu arranged the Indian forces, the allied force in the time of liberation struggle, to leave Bangladesh in March 1972 within less than three months of independence. Here, H E Dr Shamsul Alam commented that it was a courageous and far-reaching decision by the national hero citing the example of other countries. For instance, the US military personnel are still stationed in Japan since the Second World War and in South Korea since 1954, and in the Philippines since 1975.

The Hon'ble State Minister further added, Bangabandhu started running the administration with empty coffers as the Pakistani occupied forces burnt the paper money of the state bank branch in Matijheel in the morning of 16 December 1971, before the surrender of the Pakistani forces in the afternoon that day. The occupied forces took all the gold reserves kept in the state bank here, consequently, the economy was shattered and ruined. Rice/paddy/wheat stocked in the food go-downs were taken to cantonments during the wartime. Crops were damaged and could not be harvested during the War of Liberation. Bangabandhu relieved the farmers from paying rents of their lands up to 25 bighas, withdrew all certificate cases for non-payment of land rents. Bangabandhu had to nationalize jute and textile mills and other mills-factories left by Pakistani owners and had to look for appropriate managerial manpower. Even though there was a dearth of funds, Bangabandhu established Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) at Farmgate to coordinate and help initiate agricultural research. He also established Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI) at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Bangladesh Cotton Development Board (CDB), Bangladesh Sugarcane Research Institute (BSRI), and organized Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) for expansion of irrigation and distributions of agricultural inputs. Furthermore, Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) and Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA) at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) campus at Mymensingh and Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) were set up at the very outset emergence of Bangladesh for rural development. Besides, through cooperatives, Bangabandhu established headquarters for the Army, Navy, and Air forces at the cantonment.

The Hon'ble State Minister commented that agriculture development and diversification has achieved tremendous progress under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, however, the institutional foundation of this progress and development was set by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibar Rahman during his tenure. The first budget of Bangladesh with an allocation of BDT 776 crore, the development budget was BDT 500 crore, of which BDT 101 crore was allocated for the agriculture sector. For attaining food autarky and reducing hunger and poverty, Bangabandhu allocated the highest amount in development budget for agriculture, and this ignited the green revolution in Bangladesh during the early years of the 70's. The First Five Year Plan of Bangladesh was prepared in one year and started its implementation on 1 July 1973-1974 fiscal year emphasizing rehabilitation and job creation in the country. One hundred seven countries recognized Bangladesh during Bangabandhu's short-period of administration. And, Bangabandhu at that time, nationalized 24 thousand primary schools and established the first Education Commission headed by Kudrat-E-Khuda to bring changes in the education system.

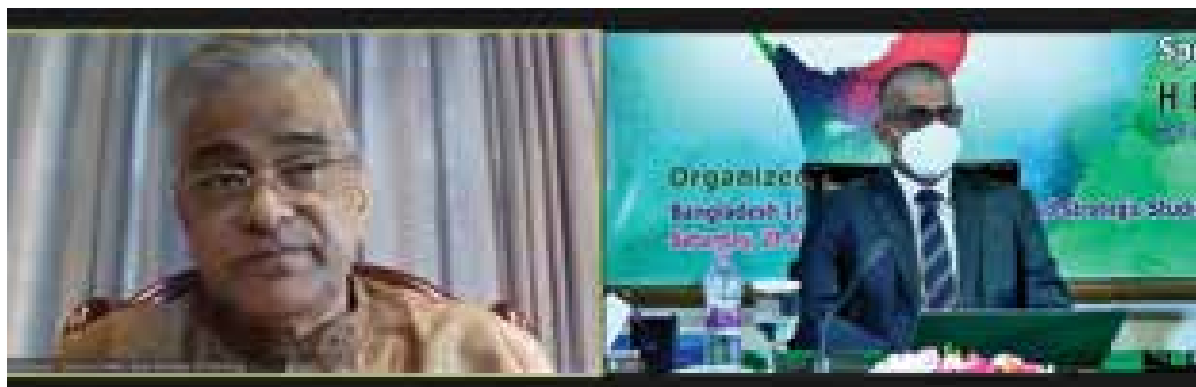
The Hon'ble State Minister stated that there is a long-list of Bangabandhu's milestone attainments for the transformation of people's social and economic lives and it is quite astonishing how Bangabandhu could do all these in a short-period of his tenure. The value can be added to all these commemorations and discussions on Bangabandhu and his life contributions if the country would be able to imbibe with his immortal ideals of humanity, democracy, and secularism. All may go in vain or get unstable if people deviate from any of his ideals. For uninterrupted development, there should be political institutions with Bangabandhu's ideals. For establishing an exploitation-free society, as Bangabandhu reiterated so many times that corruption must be rooted out from every sphere of social and economic existence.

The Hon'ble Special Guest mentioned that the source of all power should be politics and political institutions. Political institutions free of usurpations will lead to eradicating corruption from every sphere of life. For establishing a society of democratic values, there is a need to root out terrorism, religious fundamentalism, and extremism to make the development sustainable and inclusive. The people of the country want all the killers of Bangabandhu of that fateful night and the sequential perpetrators of 21 August, 2004 to be brought under justice any time soon to remove the bloodstain from the national history.

H E Dr Shamsul Alam stated that under the leadership of Hon'ble Sheikh Hasina, the country charted the path of attaining 'Sonar Bangla' by around 2041 as dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibar Rahman. The country will be an upper-middle-income country by 2031 and free from poverty, illiteracy, and free of unemployment by 2041. It is in the course of implementation of the Eighth Five Year Plan attaining 8.51 percent of GDP growth by 2024-2025. During the Seventh Five Year period, it attained two milestone targets of becoming a lower middle-income country and twice qualified the criteria of becoming a developing country leaving the stigma of the least developing country and that will be formally accorded by the General Assembly of the UN in 2026. The country is on course of rapid economic and social transformation and for this human resource development has been aptly emphasized in the new national development planning.

The Hon'ble Special Guest pointed out that the education system must cater to the need of the hour embracing technological advancement in course content, enriching moral and democratic values at every tier of the educational system. Educational institutions should be operational as soon as possible. The country has already lost one year and a half, resulting in a big generational loss that needs to be recovered. The respected teaching community, who are the golden soldiers in nation-building, should play a dedicated and non-partisan role in this regard.

At the conclusion of his speech, H E Dr Shamsul Alam once again congratulated BIIS and expressed his gratitude for organizing the Webinar. He also acknowledged the well-prepared, focused, and informative presentations by the two luminary presenters. He concluded his speech by paying homage to the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



Introduction of the Book



Dr Mahfuz Kabir

Research Director, BISS

A book titled “Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation’s Emergence and Emancipation” published by BISS was launched at the event by H E Dr A K Abdul Momen, MP, Hon’ble Foreign Minister, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh. **Dr Mahfuz Kabir**, Research Director, BISS introduced the book to the audience. He stated that the book aims to celebrate the birth centenary of the greatest Bengali of all time, Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. As part of this venture, BISS organized a series of seminars and webinars throughout the year from March 2020. The events aimed to revisit Bangabandhu’s ideas, thoughts, and visions and also reaffirm Bangladesh’s commitment to appraising contemporary world issues based on his ideas. This book is the compilation of revised and edited versions of the papers presented and deliberations made at those events. It aims to present the ideas in a more comprehensive manner for the larger audience.

Dr Kabir then briefly discussed the content of the book. He informed the audience that the book has six chapters including the introduction and conclusion. Each of the chapters incorporates one or more papers from the distinguished scholars from the old generation and the new generation to illustrate the contribution of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Chapter two-‘National Emancipation’-is comprised of two papers. In the paper titled, ‘Diplomacy of Bangladesh Liberation: Contextual Tales and Advent of Mujib’, Abul Kalam takes a scholarly journey to reflect on the natures and circumstances as Bangabandhu contemplates that the diplomacy of Bangladesh’s liberation can barely be addressed without considering the contexts in which the issues of struggle emerged. Professor Dr Syed Anwar Husain in the paper titled, ‘Bangabandhu and Bangali Nationalism’, argues that both ‘Bangali nationhood’ and the state ‘Bangladesh’ are the results of a historical evolution where the latter preceded by the former.

In chapter three ‘Leadership’, there are four papers. In the paper titled ‘The Iconic Bangabandhu: His Leadership Values for Then, Now and the Future’, A K Abdul Momen tries to capture the intricate nuances of Bangabandhu’s leadership and how that propelled Bangladesh’s nationalist struggle for liberation. Smruti



S Pattanaik, in the paper titled, 'Bangabandhu: Leader of the Oppressed', underscores one of the most significant attributes of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which is his conviction to stand for the rights of the oppressed. In the paper titled 'Bangabandhu in the Global Context' by Md Rafiqul Islam intends to locate and situate Bangabandhu in the global context to shed light on his philosophy and work beyond the national boundary and within the global realm. Dr Sufia Khanom, in the paper titled, 'Empowering Nation through Empowering Women: Reflection from Bangabandhu's Thoughts', highlights the aspects of Bangabandhu's empowerment thoughts envisioning a society where women would have equal rights and the capacity to explore their potential to the fullest.

In chapter four 'Foreign Policy', there are five papers. Md Shahriar Alam in the paper titled, 'Bangabandhu: The Architect of the Bangladesh Foreign Policy' dealt with how Bangabandhu, the leader of a nationalist struggle, navigated a young nation through the turbulent time of the Cold War. As the title suggests, M Ashique Rahman in the paper 'Bangabandhu and the Roots of Bangladesh Foreign Policy' investigates the philosophical origin of this famous premise, 'friendship to all and malice to none'. In the paper titled 'Balancing Divergent Global Powers', A S M Ali Ashraf tries to explore the role of Bangabandhu in the foreign policy decision-making process by balancing the divergent global powers. Shahab Enam Khan, in his paper, 'Bangladesh Foreign Policy: Regional Politics and Policies Under the Bangabandhu Regime between 1971 and 1975', examines the leadership and decision-making process of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's regime within the Cold War both as the global and regional settings. In the paper titled, 'Enduring Policy Ideals and Practices— Evidence from Bangabandhu's Speech at the United Nations and Bangladesh's Voting Records at the Assembly: 2001-2017' Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khan attempts to explore the way Bangladesh has managed to hold on to the policy ideals laid out by the Father of the Nation.

In chapter five 'Nation Building and Development', there are six papers. Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee in the paper titled, 'Bangabandhu's Economic Philosophy: A Brief Review of The Unfinished Memoirs' attempts to explore the economic philosophy of Bangabandhu's anecdotes written in his notebooks. In the paper titled, 'Post-War Reconstruction', Gobinda Chakraborty guides the readers through Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's model of postwar reconstruction in the newly liberated Bangladesh. In 'Transformation of Economic Policies and Outcomes', Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad highlights Bangabandhu's aim to reorient industries and the ethos of changes brought by him starting from the relief for the returnees from India and the people whose household economies were destroyed during the War of Liberation. Shamsul Alam, in his paper 'Bangabandhu and the Peasants' Emancipation' brings in the strong leadership of Bangabandhu and the perilous journey of him that changed Bangladesh from a basket case to an international role model of development. Mustafizur Rahman, in the paper 'From Aid Dependency to Trade Orientation: Bangladesh's Transformative Journey' captures the journey of a newly developed nation which was tied with aid, fraught with

conditionalities and subject to political manipulation and pressure. Dr Mahfuz Kabir's own paper, 'Development Trajectories and Imperatives for Vision 2041', notes down Bangabandhu's quest for the development of 'Sonar Bangla' (Golden Bengal) flourished in and furnished with economic equity and the way Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina aspire to achieve it with 'Vision 2041'.

In conclusion, Dr Kabir said that the book collates and contextualizes Bangabandhu's ideologies, political development visions and teachings throughout the past, present, and future. The book targets the new generation of researchers, scholars, and students so that they understand Bangabandhu and Bangladesh.



Address of the Chief Guest



H E Dr A K Abdul Momen, MP

Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

At the beginning of his speech, the Chief Guest, **H E Dr A K Abdul Momen, MP**, Hon'ble Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, greeted the learned audiences and thanked the organizers of BISS for organizing the Webinar titled 'Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation'. Also, he paid his deep respect to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman whose charismatic leadership and long struggle helped to achieve the long-cherished independence of the country.

The Foreign Minister recalled the month of mourn with a heavy heart due to the tragic event of 15 August 1975. He paid the deepest tribute to the memories of those who have brutally killed along with the Father of the Nation on a dreadful night. Dr Momen opined that the month of August is the month of mourning for the Bengali nation. Thus, the theme discussed in the Webinar is the attempt for true learning of how an independent nation-state named Bangladesh emerged from the unwavering and undaunted leadership of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Foreign Minister remarked that it is fascinating for him to listen to the lessons from history from one of the paper presenters, his old friend and classmate Dr Syed Anwar Husain who depicted the role of Bangabandhu in cementing the Bangali nationhood and spearheaded the independence of Bangladesh. He then further expressed his gratitude to the other presenter, his young friend, Dr Atiur Rahman who had dealt with the life-long struggle and farsighted leadership of Bangabandhu that led to the emancipation of the Bengali nation today. Moreover, Dr. Momen mentioned the delivery of the Special Guest, Hon'able State Minister, Dr Shamsul Alam, who has mainly shared how Bangabandhu spearheaded the movement of political freedom and economic emancipation for the Bengali nation. The Foreign Minister was also pleased to learn the valuable thoughts, insights, and ideas of the distinguished speakers.

The Foreign Minister also expressed his joy to take part in the inauguration of the book with the same title in the Webinar. He said that it is heartening to see that a think tank like BISS has been encouraging

research on the war of independence and the Father of the Nation. He then suggested BISS to publish some write up on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's achievement in resolving difficult issues with her neighbors in both India and Myanmar. He viewed that, to resolve these, the dialogue, discussion, and the legal process without shooting a single bullet are the noteworthy attempts that prove Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's diplomatic maturity and capacity to achieve the goals as far as bilateral or multilateral issues are concerned.

Foreign Minister Dr Momen stated that the title of the Webinar organized today is very special and praise-worthy taking into account various fronts. Especially, there must not be any confusion on the fact that Bangladesh, Bengali nationhood, and Bangabandhu are inseparable and intertwined with each other. To illustrate, he explained how the concept of Bengali nationhood got cemented under the able and unflinching leadership of Bangabandhu. The people of the then East Pakistan presented Bangladesh as the reflection of a long-cherished plan and independent land to be politically democratic, culturally secular and pluralized, and economically egalitarian. The long for such leadership like Bangabandhu capable of freeing the people from the shackles of century-old subjugation and terrain. With his leadership charisma, Bangabandhu can easily reach the heart of the common mass.

The Foreign Minister further also recalled, in 1947, when India was divided into two domains based on religion, East Pakistan was born. Bangabandhu's dream was to establish secular, egalitarian, and democratic governance system for the people of the then East Pakistan. Later with the Language Movement from 1947-52, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman proved correct that the issues of Bengali nationalism as well as the mother tongue separated the people of the then East Pakistan from West Pakistan; basically, two wings of Pakistan separates by around 12 hundred miles apart. During living together with untied Pakistan for two decades (24 years), Bangabandhu not only realized the perpetration of disparity and exploitation on East Pakistan but also the subjugation by the Pakistani leadership. Bangabandhu led a popular movement that reflected the popular aspirations of the exploited people of the then East Pakistan. For example, his historic Six-point demands are the 'Magna Carta' of Bangladesh. The points are lucid and easy to comprehend and most importantly, the true reflection of the feelings of Bengalis. His parties managed a poster titled 'Shonar Bangla Shoshan Keno?'.

These attempts, however, clearly stated that the reason for the disastrous situation of the then East Pakistan. It was for the first time, the Bengalis flamed for the economic and political lives and national security in the form of demand for greater autonomy for the then East Pakistan. While cementing the sense of Bengali nationhood among the people of the then East Pakistan, Bangabandhu as a part of long-term vision strives hard to take his people gradually and systematically to be the ultimate path of emancipation.

The Foreign Minister Abdul Momen further informed, to emancipate the Bengali nation, Bangabandhu has been in and out of the jail on numerous occasions totaling more than 13 years of his timeline, and his family is fully jeopardized, yet, he never gave up. On the eve of the 1970 election, Bangabandhu literally ran from one country to another to help extremely and cooperate with the flood-affected distressed people. He is truly a people's leader which was largely reflected by the landslide victory of his political party-the Awami League. For example, his party Awami League won 167 parliamentary seats in the then East Pakistan out of 169 seats. During that time, the total number of parliamentary seats was 300, and 13 were reserved for women totaling 317. Out of that, Awami League got 54 per cent vote which is 167 and the other big party-the West Pakistan's People's Party got 81 plus 5 (27 per cent) of the vote. In addition to that, there are other smaller parties like the Council of Muslim League, Convention Muslim league, Khyam Muslim League as well as the National Awami Party (NAP).

These independent parties got 36 per cent of the vote and supported Bangabandhu's cabinet. But unfortunately, the then military junta in collaboration with Pakistan's Peoples Party of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto denied Bangabandhu and his party to form a government despite the overwhelming majority vote. The parliamentary session was supposed to seat on 3 March, and at this, the people of the then Pakistan protested and demanded the liberation of East Pakistan. On 7 March 1971, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a historic speech laid down the road map for their struggle for independence and gave the Pakistani rulers the last chance to honour the will of people and democracy. But unfortunately on 23 March, instead of honouring the will of people, the military junta conducted a genocide in which around 3 million people died, 10 million people including him took shelter in neighboring country India, and one-third of the nation's population were displaced from the home. At this time, Bangabandhu, the leader of the majority party in Pakistan, was arrested, and just before his arrest, he left his clarion call for the independence of Bangladesh.

The Foreign Minister further stated that though Bangabandhu was arrested and detained in jail in West Pakistan, people were unified under his leadership. The nine months of struggle, fight, and bloodshed and the cost of 3 million myrtles, Bangladesh was born on 16 December 1971. Bangabandhu viewed that the nation has achieved indomitable strength for achieving independence. Bangabandhu said and the Foreign Minister quoted 'as we have already learned how to sacrifice our own lives, now no one can stop us', even though we brought a sovereign and independent land, we needed to march forward towards the emancipation of the nation economically. Then again, the greatest Bengali of all time, Bangabandhu laid out the vision to build 'Sonar Bangla' - a golden Bengal-and took initiatives to make this a reality. The guiding principles of Bangladesh were set up and the constitution was written and adopted with the fundamental principles of Bengali nationalism, democracy, secularism, and socialism. In Article 25 of Bangladesh's constitution, the statement 'Friendship to all, malice towards none' is rolled out which is still believed to be the exemplary philosophical stance in terms of the foreign policy of any country.

The Foreign Minister highlighted the point that in the world fall apart, with deadly Cold War threaten by nuclear weapons, Bangabandhu's position was always against the oppressed and anything that disrupts global peace, security, and development. Bangabandhu declared and Dr Momen quoted 'The word is now divided in two parties- the oppressor and the oppressed. I'm on the side of the oppressed'. Bangabandhu once told and Dr Momen quoted 'I will sacrifice my life if necessary to eliminate all injustice and exploitation from the country' and this is what exactly happened afterward. He remarked that it is very shameful and unfortunate for the nation that Bangabandhu was brutally killed on his own soil by his very own countrymen. This tragic incident took place when Bangladesh targeted progressing towards the vision of 'Shonar Bangla'.

The Foreign Minister positively remarked that people are fortunate to have his able daughter Sheikh Hasina as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Under her dynamic and pragmatic leadership like her father, the country is progressing fast on achieving 'Shonar Bangla' as dreamt by Bangabandhu. Dr Momen concluded by requesting all that in the month of the nation's mourning, let all renew a commitment to the nation-building effort of the leader Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He also reminded a quote from Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore:

Udoyer pothe shuni kar bani
bhoi nai tar bhoi nai
Nisheshe pran je koribe dan
Khoi nai tar khoi nai

That is, few sacrifices for the well-being of humanity will never die, they will remain eternal, no wonder, Bangabandhu sacrificed his life, therefore, he is ever living with us.



Closing Remarks



Ambassador M Fazlul Karim

Chairman, BISS

Ambassador M Fazlul Karim Chairman, BISS, praised the stimulating discussion and dialogue on the life and contributions of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He felt that Bangabandhu was successful in his political life for a number of reasons: first, he was from the grassroots so could feel the pulse of the nation very well, second, he was always in touch with the masses. Whenever he could manage time, he would travel to the remotest areas of the country to see the condition of the people first hand, third, his self-sacrifice and devotion to the country and its people are well documented, fourth, his bravery and uncompromising attitude to uphold justice and fair play, and finally, he had a plan and vision to establish an exploitation-free and prosperous Bangladesh.

Ambassador Karim added that Bangabandhu loved the country and its people too much as he once mentioned in an interview: 'My greatest strength is my love for my people; my greatest weakness is that I love them too much.' Bangabandhu's greatest success was the establishment of an independent country. He also dreamt of building a happy and prosperous 'Sonar Bangla' for which all need to work with diligence, honesty, and sincerity and be ready to make self-sacrifice.

Ambassador Karim Bangabandhu has earned a place unsurpassed in the history of Bangladesh and he is one of the most luminous stars in the world. He was and still is a beacon for the oppressed people of the world; even today people seek inspiration from his thoughts and policies in their struggles against injustice and repression.

At the end of his speech, Ambassador Karim thanked the Chief Guest, Special Guest, and the keynote speakers for their valuable time and insightful presentations. He also thanked all those who joined the Webinar and shared their opinions and thoughts. He hoped that the Webinar had helped everyone learn quite a lot about various aspects of the life of Bangabandhu, his ideas, and visions and his contributions to the country as well as for the world.

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