



PROCEEDINGS
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15 March 2020
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Published by

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)
1/46, Old Elephant Road (West of Ramna Police Station),
Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

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Website: www.biiss.org

Printed by

GraphNet Limited

95 Naya Paltan, Khan Tower

1st Floor, Dhaka-1000

Phone: 9354142, 9354133, 01715011303

E-mail: graphnet@gmail.com

Seminar on

Bangabandhu's *The Unfinished Memoirs*: A Review

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organized a seminar titled "Bangabandhu's *The Unfinished Memoirs*: A Review", on 15 March 2020, at the BISS auditorium. It was initiated with the purpose of holding discussions on the aforementioned book about the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The seminar was divided into two sessions. Speakers in the inaugural session were Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman, Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), and Dr. Shamsul Alam, Member (Senior Secretary), General Economics Division (GED), Bangladesh Planning Commission, Government of Bangladesh. Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te, Director General, BISS, delivered the welcome address. H.E. Dr. A K Abdul Momen, honourable Foreign Minister, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, graced the session as the chief guest. Ambassador M Fazlul Karim, Chairman, BISS, chaired the session.



In the first session, speakers were Dr. Md Rafiqul Islam, Associate Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Dhaka University; Dr. Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee, Professor, Department of Economics, Dhaka University; and Dr. Syed Anwar Husain, Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, ndc, psc, te, moderated this session.



Both sessions contained open discussion after presentations. Speakers discussed Bangabandhu's visions about Bangladesh, regional and global issues, different aspects of his policies in these regards before and after independence of Bangladesh. Members from the audience asked various questions, shared their personal experiences, provided own suggestions, recommendations and opinions. This programme was the beginning of a series of seminars on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman that BISS would arrange in the Mujib Borsho, with an intention of publishing a book on the Father of the Nation.

INAUGURAL SESSION

Remarks by the Chair



Ambassador M Fazlul Karim

Chairman, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

Ambassador M Fazlul Karim, Chairman, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), welcomed all at the seminar on Bangabandhu's "*The Unfinished Memoirs: A Review*". He paid glowing tribute and homage to the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, under whose able leadership and guidance, the country fought its glorious war of liberation. He added that the special seminar was arranged on the occasion of Bangabandhu's birth centenary mainly to discuss the various aspects of his life, gleaned from this book as a way to pay deep respect to him.

Reflecting on *The Unfinished Memoirs*, Ambassador Karim said that the book covers a period when Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a young politician and was gradually rising as a hero and unchallenged leader of the Bengalis. The book takes readers through the growing up of a young boy and his turning into an energetic, dedicated and hardworking activist; and from an activist to a leader who represented the hopes and aspirations of the entire Bengali nation. Bangabandhu wrote these lines at a critical juncture of Bangladesh's history when he was a state prisoner in the epoch-making years: 1966-1969. His notebooks present not just a vivid description of the political situation of a crucial time period, but also contain remarks on the nature of politics and politicians of that time.

Since the early days of his school life, Bangabandhu was intensely conscious about his responsibilities for the society and the country. Therefore, he was not afraid of doing right things in the most appropriate manner. He was always ready to do daunting tasks even though no one else dared to do so. For example, he organized an agitation to bring the deplorable conditions of the local people to light when Sher-e-Bangla A K Fazlul Huq and Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy visited Gopalganj in 1938. And to save one of his childhood friends during communal riots, he took utmost risk and was later arrested when he was only a school boy. These incidents of his early life were the building blocks of his political career characterized by selfless devotion to the country and his efforts to ensure the welfare of its people.

Bangabandhu had a very secular mindset and always strived to work for the downtrodden and oppressed. Thus, during the communal clashes in 1947, he worked relentlessly to help ease the riots and save lives of people of all faiths, be they Hindu or Muslim. Taking great risks, he tried to save people in many affected areas in Kolkata and also travelled to Bihar to help the affected people there. He was honest in his work, commitments and hated conspiratorial politics of any kind, though he himself was, at times, victim of such conspiracies and was thrown into prison so many times. He had such a generous heart and fellow-feeling, that when he was told people were agitating against rulers and demanding his release from prison, he immediately advised them to demand release of all political prisoners. He termed some leaders of the then United Front as opportunists because they very often wavered in their decisions to protest against the atrocities carried out by West Pakistani leaders on the Bengalis. He knew that in order to succeed in achieving due rights of the Bengalis, strong and dedicated leadership was a prerequisite. He stated on p.280 of *The Unfinished Memoirs*, "One should never work for national development with unfit leadership, unprincipled leaders and cowardly politicians on one's side. That results in more harm than good for the people of the country."

Bangabandhu's lifelong struggle was for establishing human rights, justice, peace and social parity. He dreamt of a world where human beings would live in peace and harmony, irrespective of their race, class, religious identity and come forward to help each other in times of crises. Throughout his life, he not only fought for Bengalis or Bangladesh, but for the rights of the oppressed people of the entire world also as he declared solidarity with the marginalized and the downtrodden for realization of their rights. This noble vision and global perspective made him a true global leader. He wanted to build closer cooperation and partnerships among developing countries, lent his voice for world peace and emancipation of the oppressed. On p.237 of *The Unfinished Memoirs*, he wrote, "people from newly liberated countries had an obligation to come together to work for world peace. Those who had been bound in chains for ages and those whose wealth had been looted by imperialist forces now needed to concentrate on building their countries and would have to devote all their resources and energies into ensuring the economic and political freedom of the masses."



About Bangabandhu's foreign policy, Ambassador Karim added that he was always in favour of pursuing an independent foreign policy and not taking sides in the then Cold War ideological division of the world. In 1954, Pakistan signed a military pact with the US. Bangabandhu opposed this move as he mentioned on p.285 of the autobiography, "The newly created state of Pakistan should have followed a neutral and independent foreign policy. We should not have made enemies of any country. It was our duty to become friends with all countries of the world. It should have been a sin for us to even think of joining any military bloc since we should help maintain peace in the world and since peace is imperative to ensure economic welfare of the people of a country." This vision and prudent policy were implemented in independent Bangladesh under his judicious leadership as the country immediately joined the Non-aligned Movement (NAM).

In conclusion, Ambassador Karim said Bangabandhu dreamt of building a *Sonar Bangla* and worked tirelessly to bring smile on the faces of the poor and the needy who suffered so much under the British and Pakistani colonial rules. Only by upholding his high ideals, moral values and working diligently for the betterment of the lots of the teeming millions, people of Bangladesh can show their true respect to him.

Welcome Address



Major General Md Emdad UI Bari, ndc, psc, te

Director General, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

Major General Md Emdad UI Bari, ndc, psc, te, Director General, BISS, paid his deepest tribute to the memory of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family members. He also paid tribute to the millions of martyrs for whose sacrifice, Bangladesh stands tall today as a free and prospering country. On behalf of BISS, he expressed heartfelt gratitude to the honourable Foreign Minister **Dr. A K Abdul Momen** for gracing the session as the chief guest and thanked the learned speakers and audience for making themselves available in the seminar.

Speaking about the Father of the Nation, General Bari opined that extraordinary leadership always shaped the direction of history, and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the leader who had shaped the fate of the Bengali nation, led them towards national emancipation and gave a free country. Being a true leader, entitled as poet of politics, he provided a rabble rousing charismatic leadership, which is unique in the annals of history. He was not a leader by chance; he was a leader by choice—a leader of the masses who had his roots deep down in the soil of his country and in his people. General Bari quoted a part of Bangabandhu's historic 7th March speech, "I don't want to be Prime Minister, I want freedom of people of this land." Being a visionary leader, he sacrificed his entire life for the political, economic and social emancipation of the people of this country. General Bari also focused on the autobiography of Bangabandhu, *The Unfinished Memoirs*, which sheds light on his childhood and early political life. Although this book does not include events after the late 1950s, it clearly reflects his political ideas and thoughts which profoundly impacted his later political choices and movements. General Bari said that in order to learn his political philosophy, one should keep in mind that Bangabandhu spent large part of his life as a political player outside the state power. He fought against the colonial and undemocratic state power—first against the British Indian Empire and later, the internal colonialism sponsored by Pakistan. He fought to establish economic, political, and cultural rights of the Bengalis. He had some specific political ideals and goals, and he worked consistently to achieve them. Being a great proponent of humanism, he always attempted to come close to people. General Bari then referred to Bangabandhu's writing of 03 May 1973 that says, "As a man, what concerns mankind concerns me. As a Bengalee, I am deeply involved in all that concerns Bengalis. This abiding involvement is born of and nourished

by love, enduring love, which gives meaning to my politics and to my very being.” Here, General Bari opined that this self-identification was the key feature of Bangabandhu’s political philosophy which is a combination of views like nationalism, secularism, socialism, democracy and ultimately, peace.

The Unfinished Memoirs teaches about Bangabandhu’s struggle for the national cause and national identity. He joined the Pakistan movement to liberate poor Muslim peasants from exploitation of landlords. After the creation of Pakistan, he involved himself in progressive movements and championed the linguistic, cultural and economic rights of Bengalis. In 1948, he was imprisoned for participating in the movement demanding recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan. He lost his studentship at Dhaka University for supporting the movement of fourth class employees there and was again jailed in 1949. These could not dissuade him and he became an ardent fighter of Bengali nationalism that inspired the whole nation in different national movements starting from language movement in 1952 to the articulation of the Magna Carta, i.e., the Six-Point Movement) in 1966, the Fall of Bastille, i.e., the fall of Marshal **Muhammad Ayub Khan** due to the mass upsurge in 1969, and the landslide victory of the Awami League in 1970 election that ultimately brought great momentum in the national liberation movement of Bangladesh. On Bangabandhu’s political and economic philosophy, General Bari said that he was a strong follower and preacher of non-communal politics. His idea of nationalistic politics was different as he had strong belief in coexistence and mutual tolerance of different identity groups. He was against all forms of communal violence, not simply between Hindus and Muslims but also between and among different Muslim sects, Bengalis and non-Bengalis. He witnessed the communal riots in Kolkata on 16th August, 1947 which later spread to Noakhali. He joined Suhrawardy and Mahatma Gandhi in efforts to bring communal harmony back. In *The Unfinished Memoirs*, he strongly condemns the anti-Qadiani riots which took place in Lahore in 1953. In 1954, when riots broke out between Bengali and non-Bengali workers at the Adamjee jute mills in Narayanganj, he rushed there to calm the situation. He had been a lifelong believer in justice, freedom from exploitation and oppression. In the book, he wrote, “I myself am not communist, but I believe in socialism and not in capitalism. Because, I believe capital is a tool of the oppressor.” He found socialism as a way to free people from exploitation, oppression, remove inequality from the society, and also recognized the role of the government in uprooting exploitation and inequality.



General Bari spoke about the celebration of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu due on 17th March and that the Bangladesh government declared 17th March 2020 to 26th March 2021 as *Mujib Borsho*. This occasion could bring immense enthusiasm and opportunity for the young generation to learn about the political life and thoughts of Bangabandhu. The Director General himself was also positively encouraged by seeing the presence of students in the audience. *The Unfinished Memoirs* can be a masterpiece to learn about Bangabandhu's political philosophy, struggle for justice, equality and peace as it is not merely a record of the 34 years of his life, but also portrays his political thinking, which inspires the whole nation to build Sonar Bangla he dreamt of. General Bari concluded the speech by expressing gratitude to the learned audience for their kind participation and presence and hoped that fruitful discussions by distinguished speakers, participants and the audience would fulfill the objective of the august gathering.



Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad

Chairman, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF)

At the start of his speech, Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, Chairman, Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), paid his sincere tribute to the memory of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on the eve of his birthday centenary and prayed for the salvation and magfirat of his soul. He said that besides *The Unfinished Memoirs*, he would focus on other sources. e.g., the Six-Point Programme of 1966, Bangabandhu's speech of 7th March 1971, his many utterances, writings and speeches.

As soon as Pakistan was established and India was divided, another kind of subjugation of the Bengalis started. The history of freedom movements started, if not from 1947, then certainly from 1948, and continued up to 1971 until Bangladesh was liberated. That history is a movement against subjugation of the rights of the Bengalis: first, for the language, then cultural aspect, economy, jobs and everything else. There was blood spilled on the street in 1952 relating to the Language movement, many other killings over the years, oppression and aggression against the Bengali people. After that, came the Education Movement of 1962. That was another tool. Dr. Ahmad opined that education could be a tool for freedom as well as for subjugation. If education would be concentrated in the hands of few and the rest were neglected, that could be a tool of subjugation for the majority. That had been happening around the world in many countries and it also happened in Pakistan.

Dr. Ahmad said, if Bangladesh were said to have made progress, there was still an element of this subjugation persisting in the country against which Bangabandhu spoke very eloquently. In his speech on television and radio just before the election of 1970, he talked about education. He said nobody should be deprived of education due to poverty. That was one of the major statements; there were other statements but Dr. Ahmad attached special importance to this statement. That meant, education must be inclusive so that everybody could enjoy his/her rights. It is the first important tool; there are others, but it is the basic one. Bangabandhu spoke about that and also regarding primary education up to higher education. He talked about efficient people; good students should come to teach and be given due respect and dignity. Not only on the basis of higher salary but also of respect and dignity which was crucial. Therefore, this was also the struggle of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—from Khoka to Mujib to Bangabandhu to the Father of the Nation. It progressed as the history of freedom movement progressed. In 1969, when he came out from the jail after the uprising of people, he achieved the title *Bangabandhu*, the Friend of Bengalis. And after the war, when the nation was liberated, even before the *Muktijuddho* or War of Liberation started, he was given the title, the *Father of the Nation* which is in the constitution, in the declaration of independence. Dr. Ahmad said it was a progression of Bengali social movement to get rid of subjugation and from people who were oppressive and at the same time, it was the history of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangabandhu and the Father of the Nation.

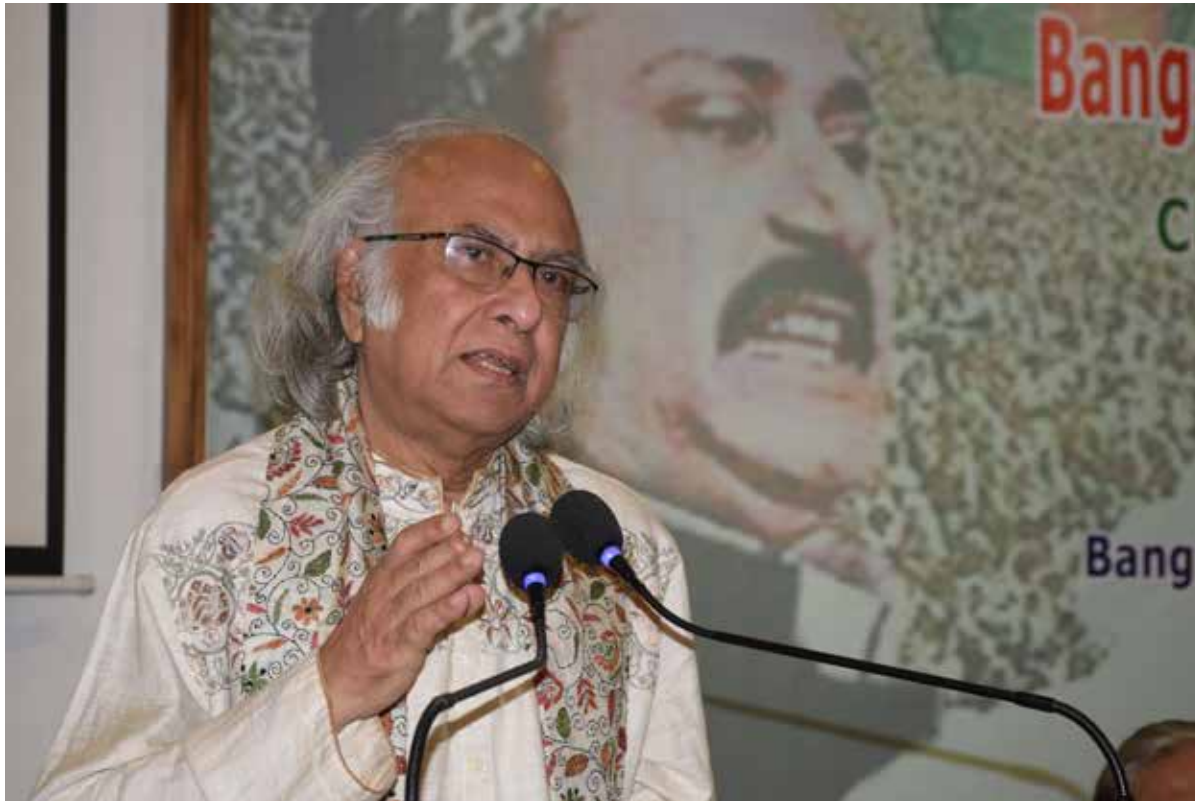
Accordingly, that history was with Bangladesh.

Bangabandhu spoke about many things regarding a society that would be for everyone. Nobody would be excluded unlike those being seen today. The UN accepted it on 25th September 2015. But Bangabandhu had said it long before. When the essence of the Liberation War was being discussed, this resonated the idea that nobody would be excluded and everybody should be included; not only included, but included in a rightful way. Bangabandhu had these sorts of ideas which were pro-people, pro-everybody. Some of the key elements of what he did, wrote, and said are as follows: First, everybody must enjoy human rights. It can be seen in his writings and in his speeches being telecast these days. It could also be found that he was talking about human rights. Human rights are universal. Bangladesh subscribed to it and Pakistan also did that time. But they were not observing the rules of the game and were trying to subjugate and oppress people; Bangabandhu also spoke about that and continued to speak about that even after independence. Everybody has to enjoy human rights and all facilities should have to be provided so that nobody would be excluded. Dr. Ahmad opined it should start with education, then jobs, then economic activities which would touch the life of the people who were left behind. Bangabandhu talked about an equitable society and no disparity. He said it many times which indicated his vision of a society where everybody would participate and have equal opportunity to progress. It would not be important or possible that everyone would rise to the same level. Opportunities must be equal so that one could go as far as s/he wanted to according to one's ability. But if opportunities were not equal, human rights would be hit hard. This is one of the vital issues Bangabandhu regularly spoke about and tried to implement when he became the Head of the Government and the Head of the State.

Dr. Ahmad discussed Bangabandhu's principle of non-communalism. Bangabandhu believed that minorities on the basis of religion or other aspects were equal citizens of this country. This is something that ran through many of his speeches and even was evident in the Six-Point Programme. It should have to be deduced from what was said there. There are certain things in that programme. Bangabandhu spoke of two separate currencies—one for East Pakistan and the other for West Pakistan. If that was not possible, there would have to be a common currency, and also constitutional safeguards, to stop capital flight from East Pakistan to West; at that time, studies showed there was indeed capital flight from the East to West in triangular trade method. Foreign exchange was earned by East Pakistan and spent in West Pakistan, though that earning was for Bengalis, regardless of their religion, or social status. Bangabandhu emphasized it was a right of the Bengali people to spend their earning for themselves. He also talked about protection of East Pakistan; after the 1965 war, it was noticed that this region was left unprotected. As a response to that, in the Six-Point Programme, he asked for separate militia or para-military force for East Pakistan so that all milieus in this land were protected.

Bangabandhu's *Sonar Bangla* or Golden Bengal means many different things to many people. But for Dr. Ahmad, it would be a society where everybody would have equal opportunity; participate in the process of development and enjoy the fruits of development in an equitable manner. Here, 'equitable manner' is the key point. That would not mean there would be development and some people would take the lion's share of it while others would remain deprived. Bangabandhu was vehemently against that. He talked about *Sonar Manush* (Golden Humans) that would be required to create *Sonar Bangla*. It would need people who would have character, would not be given to misdeeds, exploitation of others, grabbing of land, water, river and so on. He talked about that very clearly. Accordingly, the country would need a society where people would enjoy equal opportunities and none would be exploited. Dr. Ahmad opined that human and social values or altruism would make a society far better. In many of his speeches, Bangabandhu asked to do things for others, for those left behind. He forbade bragging just because someone was sitting on the chair and he/she was paid by the poor people and farmers. These are the elements for making a good society, where everybody would participate in a meaningful manner; enjoy a life worth living, of dignity and equality. He also stressed on self-

confidence and self-esteem. If one lacked self-confidence or self-esteem, s/he could not go anywhere. One could be very rich or hold a very high position, but unless there were self-esteem and self-confidence, s/he would be just another person. In this regard, he referred to Bangabandhu's statement, "You cannot suppress seven million people." That was announced at a time when helicopters were circling around and nobody knew how many plain-clothed police and military staff were there at the same time. His statement itself reflected



self-confidence and was also reflected in the announcement of the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh when she said that the Padma Bridge would be built by Bangladesh solely on the basis of self-help. It came down the line and all should learn from that. Nevertheless, Dr. Ahmad also pointed out that just having confidence would not suffice; rather, one should work for it, prepare himself/herself for it so that confidence could be realized.

Bangabandhu talked about best utilizing all resources owned by the country—land, water and soil. Dr. Ahmad referred to water policies and water acts, in many of which he himself had been engaged. Many years ago, Bangabandhu opined that for the best utilization, there should be an environment created where everybody could participate in a meaningful way. For example, land should be allocated not only for somebody but for everybody; the same would apply for benefits too. The cooperative he announced as a part of *Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League* (BAKSAL), under which land would be shared as one-third for landowners, one third for workers, and one third for the government. That was a very far-sighted proposal. If he were alive and could implement that, now the government would have enough resource and there would not be grabbers like the ones being seen today and there would be a society of more equality than today's. He focused on uplifting the downtrodden. Today, Bangladesh has around 11 per cent of its population who are extremely poor. Back then, the proportion was much higher. Still, 11 per cent is around 20 million. That means, today the country has a lot of people about whom Bangabandhu thought at that time. He believed there should not be any downtrodden; their uplifting should be in consideration and necessary tasks must be taken into account. These were some of the things he said people of the country must do.

Apart from these, Bangabandhu suggested citizens of the country about things which must not be done. One was corruption. He talked extensively on corruption and corrupt people, who were eating away all the fruits of whatever they had at that time. He talked about encroachers and grabbers, rigidly forbade encroachment, looting and dishonesty. In the election manifesto of 2018 of the present Awami League government, these had been identified as key problems; it includes zero tolerance against corruption, encroachment and grabbing. Dr. Ahmad opined that these questions must be asked to leaders of society, not only political leaders but leaders in all other fields also, about what was being done and why these had not been resolved yet whereas Bangabandhu thought and spoke of them long ago. There was a tendency among some to criticize what the government was doing and there were others to praise. Those who criticized, should ask themselves what their role was, is and would be; and those who praised, should also evaluate, learn lessons and ask themselves whether they were doing it just for achieving something for themselves. The speaker reiterated the fact how Bangabandhu emphasized on human, social and international values. He referred to General Bari's speech where the issue of oppressor and oppressed was mentioned. Bangabandhu always promised that he would work for the oppressed which emanates from these values. Here, Dr. Ahmad again pointed out the example of the election manifesto where there was zero tolerance against corruption, grabbing and other social evils and the removal of disparity standing on the way of progress. It has also been mentioned that the country needed more educated and capable people. That capability should have to run through the society, not concentrated among a certain class or classes. Capability should be developed at various levels and not at a unique level. Bangabandhu mentioned that education should to be consistent with the needs of the society and spoke against producing certain degrees which had no need in the society or economy. He had pointed out these issues many years ago in 1970.

According to Dr. Ahmad, all guidelines were available from Bangabandhu's utterances but what was being done nowadays was merely talking and writing about those. Newspapers are full of writings on Bangabandhu by people. He thought that after 17 or more years, all would forget these. Things were being written and said, but not followed. He concluded by stating that the real tribute to Bangabandhu would be when the teachings he left for everyone would be followed and implemented.



Dr. Shamsul Alam

*Member (Senior Secretary),
General Economic Division (GED), Planning Commission, Bangladesh*

Dr. Shamsul Alam thanked organizers for arranging the discourse on Bangabandhu on his birth centennial named after in commemoration of the ‘Mujib Borsho’ and inviting him to contribute in this programme. He said Bangabandhu’s life was dedicated substantially towards emancipation of peasants, landless farmers, share-croppers, wage labourers; but this aspect so far, did not receive sufficient attention among researchers, scholars and political commentators. Through adequate reviews and analyses of his life struggles towards arousing Bengali nationhood, political manoeuvring and accommodation, his vision for the toiling masses, regional and international political vision and alignment was revealed throughout his work which was a manifestation of making a nation in South Asia.

In his presentation, Dr. Alam shed light on what Bangabandhu delivered to farmers/the peasantry by and large, and how he set the path of agricultural/rural transformation by institutional development when he got the opportunity to lead a newly-emerged nation in a turbulent world political landscape. When Bangladesh emerged as an independent nation through waging a people’s War of Liberation, it was a completely shattered and ruined country in terms of economic, social and infrastructural aspects where Bangabandhu landed in and took helm of the administration on 10 January 1972. Unorganized bureaucracy was there as there was no cash to transact in the Bangladesh Bank and notes were all burnt before occupied forces surrendered. He said that more than 10 million refugees started pouring into the country having no food stock, no cattle stock to plough the lands, no seeds to sow; millions of arms were at the hands of freedom fighters in every nook and corner of the country, and disciplinary forces were not organized then. But Bangabandhu tackled everything very passionately and courageously. Politically, within a very short period of time, the nation received a very well-crafted, forward looking and visionary constitution. Bangladesh became a UN member, joined the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) after three years of independence. Allied forces withdrew, arms from freedom fighters were taken back and a general election was held. The country set for the way to parliamentary democracy within short time after independence. The nation was fortunate to soon have the first five year plan with the aim of reconstruction as the war had ravaged the economy. The Bangladesh Planning Commission was formed in 1972 to prepare five year plans within 19 days of Bangabandhu’s homecoming. By contrast, India and Pakistan who both became independent in 1947, it took them four and six years to found their planning commissions; the Indian planning commission was formed in 1951, while Pakistan’s was formed in 1953, respectively. With skillful economic management, Bangabandhu was leading the nation towards recovery and transformation. For the peasantry and agricultural sector, he set strong institutional foundation, took steps to improve the problems of input shortage and recovering the transport system to develop agricultural marketing system. Dr. Alam provided some evidence

based on accounts about how Bangabandhu initiated the path of agricultural modernization that acted as base of agricultural successes, the legacy of what was being seen today.

In the Cold War era of international political groupings, Bangabandhu's domestic economic recovery efforts were not that much reflected in the western media and often misconstrued by pro-western economists. Continuing existence of Bangladesh was doubted by influencing diplomats and economists who branded Bangladesh as a "bottomless basket" or 'basket case'. The World Bank in their first report on Bangladesh on 25th September 1972, expressed that even in very favourable circumstances, it was very complex to predict whether Bangladesh could prosper. The speaker also discussed about how Bangladesh was now doing with its agricultural progress and diversification that led to a huge rural transformation. He said that extreme poverty in Bangladesh was now below 10 per cent and moderate poverty was around 18 per cent. Poverty in the mid-70s was 84 percent of total population. In 1972, total rice production was 1.1 million metric ton which now stood at 38 million metric ton. In open water fish production, Bangladesh ranked third. In poultry and egg production, Bangladesh was self-sufficient. In goat production, Bangladesh ranked fourth and self-sufficient in banana production. A couple of exotic fruits are produced in the country and it gained unprecedented momentum in production of major fruits. All these were possible because of initial establishments during Bangabandhu's time to act on.

Referring to the World Bank's first report on Bangladesh, he said it was stated that 4.3 million houses were burnt during the liberation war in 1971 and there was shortage of 3 million tons of food grains in the country. To rehabilitate them, 1 million houses/shelters needed to be built immediately. 900 colleges and 6,000 high schools were destroyed and needed to be built to start educational activities. Mills and factories were also destroyed which also needed rebuilding. With these figures, one could understand what gigantic tasks and funds were needed to cope with the situation.

In those days, foreign experts opined there would be famine and up to five million people might die out of starvation in 1972; that year, Oxfam, World Bank and USAID also expressed concerns on an ensuing famine. But that did not happen in 1972 or in 1973 due to massive relief work and improvement in transportation system including use of waterways. But Bangladesh had a famine in 1974 as a massive flood had taken place and two-third of lands were submerged for 02-03 months; moreover, at the end of 1974, food aid for Bangladesh had stopped with the plea of selling jute goods to Cuba, thus contributing to the famine during the last quarter or latter half of 1974. In 1972, Bangabandhu exempted payment of land tax up to 25 bigha and all debts of pre-liberation period were written off. The then government fixed the minimum prices for paddy, jute, sugarcane and tobacco. Rationing system was introduced for primary schoolteachers, landless and poor farmers. For low-income consumers, Consumer Supply Corporation (COSCOR), a fair price outlet was introduced that later became the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB). Khas lands were distributed to landless farmers. Mortgaged lands, if enjoyed for seven years by the mortgagee, must be returned to landowner without any compensation. Free textbooks were distributed to primary school students. This was begun in Bangabandhu's time. In the first budget of taka 7.01 billion, 5.0 billion was earmarked for rehabilitation and development. From the 5.0 billion development budget, 1.0 billion was earmarked for agricultural sector aimed to support production of essential agricultural products of 12 sectors of the first budget. Thus, agriculture sector received the highest allocation. In the first five year plan, the Agriculture Ministry received the highest allocation of taka 4.591 billion followed by the Ministry of Flood Control and Water Resources of taka 3.212 billion which had linkage to crop productivity and agricultural activities. Besides, the Rural Development Ministry received taka 1.499 billion emphasizing rural infrastructures. In 1973, Bangabandhu's government provided taka 100 million as loan to share-croppers and small farmers, distributed 50,000 tons of fertilizers to farmers at subsidized prices, 2,125 maunds of Boro rice, seeds, 3,000 thousands maunds of wheat and 1,700 maunds

of potato seeds were distributed at very nominal prices to farmers by the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC). Ceiling for land ownership was set at 100 bighas.



In 1972, the Cotton Development Board was founded. That year, Bangabandhu also reconstituted the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute and Bangladesh Institute of Agricultural Researches, what is called BARI. The Jute Research Institute was formed in the same year. In 1973, the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) for coordination of all agricultural researches was established at Farmgate, Dhaka. The Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture was established in 1975. The BADC was established to expand irrigation facility to farmers and help production of high yielding variety seeds. To encourage agricultural extension services and research, the **Bangabandhu Prize** was introduced in 1973. Bangabandhu on 13th February 1973, made agricultural graduates at par with engineering and medical graduates in terms of salary grade and rank with a view to invigorating agricultural extension, research and education, resulting in far-reaching impacts of agricultural and rural transformation. Thus, Bangabandhu laid out the foundation of Bangladesh's agricultural successes what the country was now seeing, as Dr. Alam opined. In agricultural productivity, irrigation has an enormous impact. In 1973, Bangabandhu's government installed 20,000 power pumps, thus allowing rapid expansion of shallow and deep tube wells. Here, the speaker provided some figures about the exponential increase of irrigation areas in those days:

Year	Irrigated land area (acre)
1971-72	25,87,300
1972-73	29,92,500
1973-74	32,02,250
1974-75	35,61,472

In his opinion, this rapid expansion of irrigated area bore testimony how Bangabandhu's government tried to revolutionize agricultural sector towards the uplift of peasants in rural Bangladesh, who comprised 90 percent of the country's population then. But after his brutal assassination, the nation was thrown into wilderness and lost momentum of development for continuous two decades, up to 1995 to have a new jolt again in 1996 when Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina's** government came into power for the first time, on 23rd June of that year.

Focussing on the current scenario, Dr. Alam said that honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is a determined, visionary statesman bearing the torch of Bangabandhu for transformation and development with firm commitment towards agricultural modernization and expansion to a full blown commercial agriculture, befitting to a developed nation that she aspires to be attained by 2041. Bangladesh is expected to become a developed country by then with a per capita income of US\$ 12,500. There will be no poverty, illiteracy and everyone will be covered by universal health coverage. He concluded by saying that the nation had no other option than to let her go unabated.

Ambassador Karim said Bangabandhu laid the foundation stone for development of agricultural and the peasants of this country. But many people were not aware of those initiatives in these regards. This area would need further research and attention; information should be disseminated in a wider way so that more people could know about his agricultural initiatives and policies.



Open Discussion

Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, former chairman, BISS, said the timing of the seminar was very good as there were only two days left for celebrating the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He also paid sincere tribute to Bangabandhu as well as all the martyrs of the Liberation War who sacrificed their lives so that the country could become free, its people could flourish and pursue their dreams. He made three points about reading *The Unfinished Memoirs*: 1)



the book shows very clearly that Bangabandhu was a son of the soil. He was born in a very typical rural Bangladeshi village, grew up with the mud and water clinging to him throughout his childhood. But as he grew up, he never lost sight of that root. As he blossomed as a leader, he joined the political elite but never lost his root. He was always rooted in the soil of Bangladesh; 2) as one reads the book, one gets to visualize how the political thoughts and philosophies of the great leader Bangabandhu gradually evolved, how he started to look at people around him, first the nearer surroundings, then the bigger surroundings and then the nation as a whole and how he went up to giving the people of this country the concept of nationhood. They were a nation, but did not really know it. Bangabandhu made them aware of this nationhood. It also demonstrates how he had great natural instincts rooted in his love for people around him and how he uncannily picked the right lessons up from the environment, i.e., the society around him as well as important political personalities of the time. He worked with others, learnt from them and also brought in his own instinctive understanding of Bangladesh's people; 3) his autobiography not only talks about his own deeds and exploits, rather, he also chronicles the conditions and the great struggles in society around him, efforts of people and contemporary institutions to move ahead despite great challenges.

Lieutenant General (retd.) Harun-Ur-Rashid, former chief of staff, Bangladesh Army, appreciated the effort by BISS for holding the seminar at a very important time and said that he is one of the very lucky and proud people who had been able to meet Bangabandhu three times in his life and every time for few hours. Thus, he could not really forget those moments he spent with him. As four distinguished persons had given their presentations, he just wanted to make some comments. The vision of Bangabandhu was known to all. Nobody would doubt that Bangabandhu had long vision. When he proposed the Six-Point programme and talked about Bengali nationalism, since then onwards, people of the country had gone through every step for achieving independent Bangladesh.



The country also got a constitution in the shortest possible time which the whole world recognized as the noblest constitution. Referring to what Dr. Ahmad said, he said if the country would want to pay real tribute to Bangabandhu, it must follow his vision and directives. First, General Harun pointed out that in the first constitution and in address, Bangabandhu categorically said, "In Bangladesh, there would be no politics based on religion" and it was prohibited in the constitution. But subsequently after his death, the constitution had been amended and religion was inserted. However, now it is again seen that the party which led to the victory of this country, particularly the daughter of the Father of the Nation is in power for last 14 years, and there was no change seen in this one. The second point was,

all had heard about socialism, the explanation given by Dr. Ahmad what Bangabandhu meant. But in today's society with the banking policy, it is seen that money is being accumulated in few hands and the division between rich and poor are widening. General Harun here said that Dr. Alam is one of those who are sitting in the planning commission and planning for 2020-2030-2041 and 2100. It is however, a reality that Bangladesh did not have the ultra-poor and the poor but gaps between rich and the poor are increasing. Bangabandhu categorically said all people living in Bangladesh, i.e., Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims—all would be Bengali. But nowadays, Bengali nationalism was not there. Even so to say, some people felt very shy to talk about or say the war cry 'Joy Bangla'. Finally, the Bangladesh High Court issued a verdict that 'Joy Bangla' should have to be the national slogan. He added that probably in books and theory, Bangladeshis followed Bangabandhu, but in reality, they probably were drifting away time to time from his original path. Now, with the honourable Foreign Minister present in the seminar, he asked if the Bangladesh government would likely take any action to remedy all these points he highlighted.



Mr. Abul Hasan Chowdhury, former state minister of foreign affairs, Bangladesh, offered his tribute to the memory of the greatest Bengali of all times, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and prayed for the eternal peace of his soul. He congratulated BISS for holding such a timely discussion. Reflecting on the monumental book, he said it was written by a person who had been very actively organizing from his early teens, and the hero of a thousand battles. There was a time when Bangabandhu was aged around 19 or 20, there was a call given by **Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose** for students to come out and demolish the Holwell monument which was an insult to the Bengalis, irrespective of Hindus and Muslims. One of the vanguards in those days was a student of the Islamia College and resident at the Baker hostel, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. This book should not just be read, but it would also lead Bangladesh to further progress and prosperity as indicated by distinguished panellists. But it should also be acknowledged that the inspiration

behind the book came from **Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib**. He raised another point of certainty that without the 7th March declaration/speech, there would not have been any Bangladesh. According to him, it was a masterful speech when so many odds were arrayed against Bangabandhu. He added that H.E. Foreign Minister, who was not only an academic personality but himself was also deeply involved both at home and abroad, knew the significance of the 7th March speech. There were people, the army junta who were ready for an excuse to come and extinguish the call for freedom at the very first go; all knew of unilateral declaration of independence (UDIs) being crushed in Rhodesia, Biafra. There was the volcanic upsurge where people wanted a declaration of independence. The way Bangabandhu brought the whole thing together in just 18 or 19 minutes speech, was absolutely unique. UNESCO listed it as one of the finest speeches, but Mr. Chowdhury called it the number one speech. **Winston Churchill** gave a brilliant speech but was defending and inspiring, **Martin Luther King, Jr.** was talking about his strategies; but Bangabandhu had to bring the whole array of events surrounding him into mind. The speech had tremendous universal appeal during the liberation war, when the world was divided between the Soviet and American camps. Looking at history, scholars could find out that Bengalis had remarkable support from both sides of the divide, as the themes of the speech were humanity, freedom of expression, brotherhood and not distinguishing people based on race, creed, religion, colour, etc. This universality of the speech went forward and all could see the genesis of that as well.

Ambassador Karim thanked Mr. Chowdhury for clearly pointing out the importance of Bangabandhu's 7th March speech and also independence of Bangladesh as a unique case in history, since many prior secessionist movements did not succeed. It was only Bangladesh who really fought for and ultimately achieved independence. Bengalis, being

the majority in united Pakistan, could not secede; it indeed was their war of independence.

Naheed Nazrul, convenor, Women in Politics, Dhaka, Bangladesh, informed that she belonged to a martyr family. Her father was killed by the Pakistani Army. Her brother was a great freedom fighter. She had the opportunity to meet Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman two times at the Gonobhaban; after seeing her, Bangabandhu hugged her and expressed his grief to hear that she had lost her father. She had six siblings and her mother was the only working member in the family. Her brother was only 20 years old. Because of Bangabandhu, Bangladesh achieved independence, which in turn, helped many people from this country to work, live, and avail various privileges abroad. Reflecting on Bangabandhu's contribution, she stressed that homage and tribute to him should not be limited only to this year. He should be remembered everyday and as long as Bangladesh lives. She also mentioned that the slogan "Joy Bangla" which was approved by the High Court as the national slogan of Bangladesh should need to be uttered by speakers of the seminar after their speech.



Ambassador Karim agreed with the proposal of uttering the slogan "Joy Bangla" from onwards. He also agreed that remembering Bangabandhu should not be limited to one, two or three years but everyday and in the days to come.

Mr. Salahud Din Ahmed, former member, Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), provided a poetic analogy to express the nation's gratitude and respect for the Father of the Nation. He opined that Bangabandhu's ideals, perceptions, ideology and love for the countrymen were very much alive in the hearts and minds of Bangladesh's people. The way truth was being disregarded these days, it not only disrespected Bangabandhu, but was also contrary to his visions. Real enlightened and honest citizens should have the right to commemorate his ideals and thoughts; that should be the case. Conveying sincere congratulations to BISS for arranging such a programme, he reiterated that only those enlightened enough to utter Bangabandhu's name, should be allowed to carry that flag of Bangabandhu's principles and values. If someone undeserving would be doing that, the whole nation would be liable of the ingratitude. He recalled that one of his neighbours shared an experience where Bangabandhu's name was pronounced by someone who was totally unworthy. Bangladesh must not let such people use Bangabandhu's name and dishonour his values and ideals. The educated, enlightened and conscious sections of the society should come forward to upholding the principles and visions of Bangabandhu.



Ambassador Karim said all should, whether educated or not, hold Bangabandhu's ideals, principles and teachings dearly in their hearts. Nonetheless, the educated and enlightened should have the greater responsibility as they could avail more opportunity to spread and implement these.

H.E. Bambang Prihartadi, Minister Counsellor, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, referred to Bangabandhu's four ideologies, i.e., nationalism, secularism, democracy and socialism; he wanted to know about the relation between the national anthem of Bangladesh and Bangabandhu's ideologies. He also wanted to know how Bangladesh planned to face the future challenges in the next five or ten years.





Nuzhat Tasnim Rahman Raisa, student, final year, International Relations Department, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), said the seminar was absolutely necessary but not for the audience sitting right in the room. Rather, it should have been for the younger generation who did not have much idea what Bangabandhu's ideologies were or what *The Unfinished Memoirs* actually contained. She believed that all sitting in the room were knowledgeable people who had been politically aware for a very long time, but the younger generation of this country lacked political awareness. Referring to one speaker, she said Bangabandhu had been politically active since very young age, but not many people in Bangladesh saw younger people, e.g., students, being politically aware. Most students of Bangladesh now go abroad for better education but they do not have any plan to return home and take on or carry on the legacy Bangabandhu left. In regards to all people who had given their blood, including her own grandfather, such seminars or discussions about Bangabandhu and what should be carried on, need more to be arranged with younger generation, as they were supposed to take the work ahead for the country. Referring to the Foreign Minister's speech, she said would like to request the government if there was any means to be more inclusive about the younger generation, students particularly, who were one of the prime forces behind the language movement of 1952.



Ambassador Karim said there would be more efforts to include more and more students in events organized by BISS. Replying to Ms. Raisa, he added that she was present here and BISS had done quite a bit in this regard; in earlier seminars organized by BISS, some students were involved. Hopefully in days ahead, the institute would try to do that more often.



Professor Towhida Faruki, former director general, Directorate of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Women's and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, said she was present at the frontline when the 7th March speech was delivered. People were not only listening the speech, but they were entirely into it also. She was a student of Dhaka University back then. Bangabandhu had a vision; he dreamt, sacrificed, fought and achieved. He had fulfilled the entire course which was a very great success of his life. In the 1946 election, when the **Indian National Congress** said that all Indian Muslims should be dominated by the **Muslim League** where Bangabandhu had a very big role, he said that Hindus in Pakistan would enjoy all rights and facilities and Muslims in India would enjoy the same. They would not be tortured, suppressed or oppressed. This proved how non-communal the great leader was. She questioned the panel whether people were non-communal based on what was going on here and there, and in Delhi.

Response

Dr. Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad said that in the 7th March speech, it was addressed at the same time to the people of the country, the international community and the Pakistanis. Thus, the combination was absolutely unique. Dr. Ahmad did not think anyone else could have done it under the circumstances that were prevailing at that time. It was really unique. Those who had not read the memoirs yet, must read it again and again and discover more and more things from it. He was there when the speech was delivered; it was of 18 minutes. He participated in the war of liberation and also worked in the planning commission in the Mujibnagar Government. The speech inspired him so much, he thought the declaration of independence had been delivered. But then, if Bengalis fought a war based on that speech—"ebarer sangram swadhinatar sangram", though on 26th March, it was said that Bangladesh had become independent, thus making it war of liberation. If the war would be fought after the 7th March speech, it would be termed as war of independence. Bengalis did not fight war of independence but of liberation.



Dr. Shamsul Alam said he fully endorsed Ms. Raisa from BUP. There must be more inclusion of the younger generation and students. Most people present in the seminar were above 50 or so. Those who participated in the freedom movement at that time, saw the politics of those days, and therefore, he valued her proposal fully. In future discourses, there should be included more young and adolescent speakers and talk about these issues in schools, colleges and universities. To the Indonesian minister-counsellor, he said the national anthem spoke about the serenity and beauty of the country's natural environment, seasons, rice fields; he also informed him that Bangladesh has a 100-year plan, called the *Bangladesh Delta Plan* (BDP), which focusses on how to tackle adverse impacts of climate change on its economy. That is a detailed plan on how to manage nature, natural resources, water, and keep the ecosystem and services intact, etc.



Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari appreciated the concern of Ms. Raisa about knowing the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He expressed satisfaction regarding the presence of a good number of students in the seminar. Sharing his own experience of being the Vice Chancellor at the BUP, he said that the essence of the language movement or the liberation war was so much vivid on the younger generation who were born long after 1971. He took pride in being part of the older generation because they succeeded in transmitting this essence. He assured of the noble responsibilities of the experienced and older generation to take the younger on board the boat of Bangabandhu. In this regard, he said, seminars by BISS always target a range of audience who are from both old and young generations with a view to disseminating knowledge to all. In conclusion, General Bari said that many of his own generation had seen and known the essence mentioned earlier, yet through the rigmaroles of daily life, their old minds would get cluttered. Thus, there was a need to get reiterated and reinitiated often times. In this technological era, they would require to reboot themselves. This was why the emphasis in the seminar was on old people, and younger people like Ms. Raisa came as an example to spread it outside.



Speech of the Chief Guest



H.E. Dr. A K Abdul Momen
Honourable Foreign Minister, Bangladesh

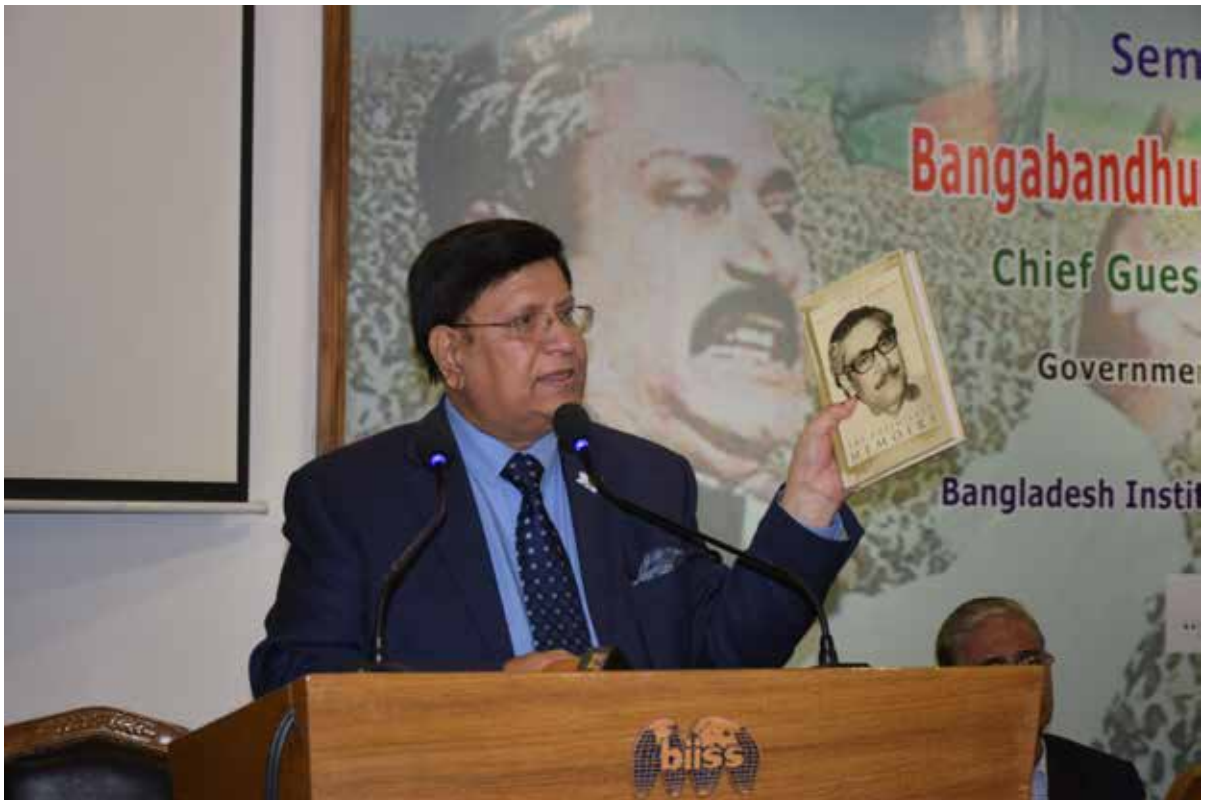
H.E. Dr. A K Abdul Momen said the young lady from the BUP drew his attention and one of her questions was how to instill the ideals of Bangabandhu among the young people of Bangladesh. These sorts of discussions basically pivoted around understanding the ideals, principles, values of Bangabandhu and then to try to imitate or follow those ideals. For the young lady, he said the government had been publishing many books on Bangabandhu, like *The Unfinished Memoirs* of Bangabandhu, if one would look at and go through it, he/she would find everywhere there are ways where one can adopt the principles Bangabandhu followed. Dr. Momen gave one simple instance: when Bangabandhu was returning from New Delhi, he did not have much money, but there were three people. In those days, all railways used to have servants compartments. He decided that they would buy two tickets for the servant compartment and one inter-class ticket. The problem was, if the TT would come, as in those days, zamindars and rich people who used to travel, could have some servants and go along with them in the servants' compartments. Thus, they found out there was one zamindar named **Khan Bahadur Abdul Momen Saheb** (p.28), who was travelling by the same train. Therefore, they decided that if the TT would come, they would immediately say they were servants of Nawab Abdul Momen Khan. The TT came, and one of the smart young men said that they were with the nawab bahadur. The TT asked no more question. They did not get into the train without tickets, but got the ones they could afford. Dr. Momen then suggested the youth of Bangladesh might look into it: cut your coat according to your cloth.

Another story he told was, when Bangabandhu at the age of 32, was visiting China. The year was 1952. He was travelling by train. He decided then to ask the TT if there were too many people using trains without tickets, which is mostly practiced in Bangladesh. The TT said, 'no'; since they achieved liberation, in the new China, none travelled without tickets and thus try to fool the government. Thus, the TT's job was little. He did not have to check tickets as everyone believed this is their country, and they did not want to defraud their government. Bangabandhu asked the TT that how long he had been working there. The TT said he had been working for a long time. Bangabandhu said that the Chiang Kai-shek government was gone, then why would they keep him? The TT said, he had been honest throughout his life and therefore, when the new government came, they kept him on the job. These are lessons for Bangladeshi people, that they should not defraud the government and must buy their own tickets. Secondly, those who were honest, they would keep their job. That

was a message Bangabandhu was telling the people, that is, they should not be corrupt.

There are so many books now like **নয়াচীন**. Recently, all the speeches of Bangabandhu since 1955 to 1975, totalling 118, had been published. Dr. Momen informed that after the publication, he got advice from few other people and found four of the speeches were missing. They would include those in the next edition. He then drew attention to two things. The greatest achievement of Bangabandhu is the independent, sovereign country of Bangladesh. This made the whole nation very proud; because of the martyrs' sacrifices, the Bangladeshi nation is here, they got an identity and Bangabandhu gave them that identity. This was not achieved just by flock of orders, but people had to struggle for it, work for it. Three million people had to die for it, 200,000 women lost their dignity for it, 30 million people had to be uprooted from their homes within the country, 10 million had to flee to another country just to escape the devastation and carnage, including Dr. Momen himself.

The greatest contribution of Bangabandhu is an independent and sovereign Bangladesh. His second greatest contribution was, he could instill his dream among the people. Not only that he created an independent country, in addition, he inculcated the dream of Sonar Bangla, a prosperous Bangladesh among all his followers. It was not easy to ingrain the dream of an individual among the whole mass. Bangabandhu had that capacity and the nation is thankful to him. Today, when the country is observing his 100th birth anniversary, there are at the same time, feelings of grief about those who sacrificed their lives for the independence, to give the Bengali people a beautiful land. The basic characteristic of Bangabandhu was, he always stood for fairness and justice; this was his cardinal principle. Even as a young school-going boy, he would stand for justice, fairness and rights of people. Throughout his life, if one analyzed it, even the book being talked about, if one read it, in every page, this young man (Bangabandhu in his youth) spoke with conviction and right. This is the message Bangabandhu gave the people that they must stand for justice and fairness. One must have confidence in oneself; if one had it, he/she could achieve the desired goal. One could be luminary, or be a star. When Bangabandhu was a young boy, one day, there was a little problem with political groups who should be and who should not be the leader. Here, Dr. Momen read from the memoirs, "When Mr. Suhrawardy, considering that he saw the extent of the difference between the two factions, he called us all in a bid to reconcile us. However, he failed in his attempt. This was when I got into an argument with Mr. Suhrawardy. He wanted us to give Mr. Anwar a prominent position but I declared that this wasn't possible. I pointed out that he was a divisive force in the party and wasn't the type who encouraged good workers. Also he had never filed a statement of accounts. All of a sudden Mr. Suhrawardy burst out, 'Who are you? You are nobody.' I retorted, 'If I am nobody, then why have you invited me? You have no right to insult me. I will prove that I am somebody. Thank you, sir. I will never come to you again. (p.30)" Here, one should look at the spirit, integrity, commitment of Bangabandhu. Suhrawardy had been his master, his mentor, but in spite of that, he had the courage and the conviction that he could say these words to him. Afterwards, Suhrawardy realized it and then of course, he was calling him to come back. Finally, he came back. That was the spirit of a young man.



Dr. Momen expressed profound admiration about that. He suggested people of Bangladesh should inculcate such spirit. There were many incidents like this. Even as a school boy, Bangabandhu was picked up by his groups; he was a little older as he had some eye problems and hence, could not go to school for years. At the Dhaka University, 4th grade employees demanded for increase in their privileges and wages, but none sided with them. But Bangabandhu understood and due to his habitual inclination towards standing for justice and fairness, stood by them too. It cost him. The university expelled him, he could not study there. For 25 years, he could not enter there. After 25 years, nevertheless, when he became the Father of the Nation, they invited him to confer the graduation degree. Therefore, when there would be any discussion about Bangabandhu, people should try to follow his spirit and cultivate those among themselves. If that could be done, then Sonar Manush could be created, which meant Sonar Bangla, could in turn, be brought.

Another thing Dr. Momen said about Bangabandhu was, he always encouraged constructive criticism, followed rules and legal process. All through his life, he kept up these practices. He followed the rules of the nation and there are so many examples even in the memoirs. The Foreign Minister thought this was another lesson for Bangladeshis that while they would be observing the birth centenary of Bangabandhu, they must do things through the process of law. He found it amazing when he was getting all the speeches of Bangabandhu in the parliament; one thing he found was, Bangabandhu had memorized the entire constitution, all the rules, which Dr. Momen saw in his daughter, the honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She also memorized all the provisions of Bangladesh's constitution. That gave him the strength. Therefore, young people should try to acquire knowledge, understand their positions and if they were on the right side of the legal process, they could be more self-confident. He suggested looking at Bangabandhu's speeches; when the speaker of the parliament argued him not to speak, he immediately showed Rule Number 73, saying, "I have the rights Mr. Speaker to speak on this issue" as he knew the subject. This is the lesson for new generation to understand the rules and their rights. If they could follow the path of Bangabandhu, they could be luminaries themselves.

Bangabandhu's strength comes from understanding the issues. He was a very practical man. If one reads the book, it is not only about one individual or his principles, but also about the environment of that time, geographical proximity of things—from Faridpur to Tungipara, 14 miles, and it takes so many days to go there. One gets to know the social structure of that period; when Bangabandhu visited the house of Nandi, one of his young Hindu friends, that friend's mother became very upset and his friend was rebuked that he brought a Muslim boy into their house. They had to wash and purify the entire house. But Bangabandhu asked his Hindu friend to come to his house, and all his Hindu friends used to come there. He never thought of any deviation between religious practices. Today, his daughter, the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh, also follows the same principle: religion is his/her personal, but events and festivals are for all. This emanates from the concept which Bangabandhu had been preaching.

Dr. Momen said he found that one of the main essences of strength of Bangabandhu was the knowledge; another was love for the people. Here, he said that Bangabandhu was once asked by **Sir David Frost** about what was his strength. Bangabandhu said he loved his people. Sir Frost then asked about his worst weakness. Bangabandhu replied the same. That love gave him the strength, courage, confidence, and along with that, practical knowledge of the situation. When this practical knowledge is looked into, it is found that his philosophy about Bangladesh's foreign policy emanated from his practical experience and knowledge. When Bangladesh came into being, it was not a strong country, had nothing but a devastated economy. He knew that the country would need lots of assistance from others. In those days, there were two big blocs, one led by the US and western powers, and the other by the Soviet Union. The Soviets helped Bangladesh a lot; without their help and veto, the country might not be able to achieve its independence. Bangabandhu was in such a situation where the natural tendency would have been to support the Soviet bloc and go along with India. But being a highly practical man, Bangabandhu had comprehensive understanding of the situation and, therefore, maintained non-alignment. He did not join any bloc. He said the cardinal principle of Bangladesh's foreign policy would be "friendship to all, malice to none", and followed the non-alignment principle. This emanated from his mindset, practical and comprehensive understanding of the global scenario as a visionary. Till today, the country has been following his principles.



The Foreign Minister said he was reading Bangabandhu's speech at the UN, in which he highlighted 25 issues and those issues till today, are very much relevant. He, at times felt puzzled that how this man could come up, or how those officials who were working with him in those days, had that vision to come up with issues which still sustain their relevance for society. When his memoir is read, another thing Dr. Momen said he would like to mention and for the young people to follow: in English language, there is a word known as envy or jealousy or hatred. These are the words common in that language. But in Bangla language, there is one additional word which is not available in English; it is known as পরশীকাতরতা. Understanding human beings, particularly the Bengali character is such a unique capacity, he see in Bangabandhu. Young people of Bangladesh should try to develop that capacity, or they might not go ahead due to this particular thing- পরশীকাতরতা.

Bangabandhu had profound fellow feeling, the support for each other. He was once returning from Delhi, and there was another gentleman who was relatively rich unlike him or his group, but still could not procure a railway ticket. He was none other than **Fazlul Kader Chowdhury**, who was always in the opponent group. Bangabandhu had a ticket and he gave it to him. He did it as the opponent leader might have more important things to do. In politics, they were in opposing blocs, but in behaviour, they were so close. Nowadays, politicians from different groups do not even talk to their opponents, whereas, Bangabandhu helped his opponent person. This is a character missing in today's politics, may be, these are the good lessons for today's people. Another thing in his book was, when Bangabandhu was in jail, the treatment meted to him by other prisoners, even those who were in charge, prison guards and others. He praised them a lot. Normally, it is always found that those who are in prison, when they come out, always make lots of stories against those people. But Bangabandhu was a man of magnanimity; he had beautiful words for all those individuals who kept him in prison, and made him follow the rules. This is something exceptional and this character should be imitated. There have been few books published on Bangabandhu and in this year, on the 100th birth anniversary

of Bangabandhu, Dr. Momen said he would like to request all friends, especially the young new generation to read those. Among them, one was *The Unfinished Memoirs*. Besides, he recently published **নয়াচীন যুগে এলাম**, and **কারাগারের রোজনামচা**. *The Secret Reports on Bangabandhu* has 12 editions, of which three have come out. The one Dr. Momen recently published was **শেখ মুজিব ভাষণ সংগ্রহ**; there are 118 speeches in it and each one shows the strength of Bangabandhu, love for his country, and dedication to welfare of the people. One of the cardinal things in his entire life and speeches was to help the Bengali nation and improve their economic emancipation. It was not only in the 7th March speech, but in every speech, he fought for justice, fairness, welfare of the Bengali people and of course, people at large across the globe.

The Unfinished Memoirs of Bangabandhu has been printed in nine other languages and recently, there was a stall at the 2020 *Ekushey Book Fair* where all these different translated copies were put up. This is the first time it was done, and by now, the Foreign Minister thought this had been translated in 13 languages and they would like to share this book with others. They sent these books to each of the Bangladeshi missions; moreover, in 77 missions, “Bangabandhu Corner” had been opened where all these translated copies as well as the books were being sent.



In addition, some of the very important pictures were being sent, so that anybody going there could see and understand Bangabandhu. There has also been established one **গণহত্যা কর্ণার** in the Shugandha, commemorating the 25th March and people are most welcome to go and see it. In the process, the Bangladesh government would like to help improve the spirit of Liberation War or **মুক্তিযুদ্ধের চেতনা**. Dr. Momen said the government wanted to inculcate the spirit because that helped the nation to achieve the victory and this spirit would also help achieve the goal of **সোনার বাংলা**—a prosperous country by 2041. He concluded by thanking all and uttering the slogan **জয় বাংলা, জয় বঙ্গবন্ধু**.

Summing up by the Chair



Ambassador M Fazlul Karim

Chairman, BISS

In summing the session up, Ambassador Karim said Bangabandhu aimed at building an inclusive society and fought for the oppressed throughout his life. In the speech delivered at the Algiers NAM Summit in 1973, Bangabandhu said: “the world is divided into the oppressed and the oppressor and I am with the oppressed.” During that time, the world was ideologically divided into East and West blocs. Bangabandhu came up with that alternative narrative. Ambassador Karim also stressed that if people of Bangladesh could follow his real ideals, they definitely could build a society that would be corruption-free and inclusive.

Highlighting Bangabandhu’s unlimited love for his people, he said Bangabandhu could read minds of the masses; everything he said, resonated very widely and well with the general masses. Indeed, there is a tendency among the younger generation to go abroad and not return, due to lack of patriotism among people in this country. Hence, there was a need to be imbued with the patriotism Bangabandhu has taught. To measure a person’s patriotism, it should be seen how much sacrifice that person made for the country. Looking at Bangabandhu’s life, it could be seen that most of the times, he was incarcerated, could not see his young children, suffered so much, fell ill and could not eat. These are sacrifices Bangladeshis should be ready to make for their country. That would make them real patriots. Unfortunately, many people would like to enjoy the fruits of independence/freedom but would not be in a position to make a little bit of sacrifice in their lives.

Ambassador Karim concluded the session by once again expressing his deep gratitude to the honourable Foreign Minister for gracing the session as the chief guest, and sharing his anecdotes and thoughts. He also thanked Dr. Qazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad and Dr. Shamsul Alam for their valuable insights and time; he extended special thanks to distinguished guests, members of diplomatic corps, academia, civil society, government officials, senior military officials, businessmen and representatives from media for actively participating in the seminar and thereby making it a success.

Session 1

Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari was the moderator of the first session; speakers in this session were Dr. Md Rafiqul Islam, Associate Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Dhaka University; Dr. Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee, Professor, Department of Economics, Dhaka University; and Dr. Syed Anwar Husain, Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP). The session began with presentation from Dr. Md Rafiqul Islam.



Dr. Md Rafiqul Islam

Associate Professor, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Dhaka

Dr. Islam thanked organizers of the programme for giving him the opportunity to deliver a speech on this special occasion. He referred to Bangabandhu as an outstanding political philosopher, a veteran political leader, an initiator of hundreds of social and political protest movements and a superb organizer against the oppression and suppression of people. Bangabandhu himself is the history of Bangladesh, and the Father of the Nation who realized an impossible dream. He conveyed, therefore, his deep respect and homage to departed soul of Bangabandhu, recalled his myriad contributions and sacrifices with utmost reverence in different contexts for attainment of the independence of Bangladesh.

Besides the outstanding contribution of Bangabandhu in the creation of Bangladesh, he indeed greatly influenced global politics with his thoughtful and sagacious inputs. At the global level, his role could be analyzed in the context of rights to self-determination, democracy and political freedom, fight against despotic government, ensuring peace, and emancipation of people. His experience and lifelong struggle against oppression of common people inspired him to think globally when he saw people around the world were being suppressed and deprived from having political freedom and right to self-determination. He himself struggled against colonial and undemocratic state power; first, against the British Raj and later, against the Pakistan state that invigorated him to fight for establishing economic, political, and cultural rights of the people not only in Bangladesh but also across the world.

Bangabandhu's global vision of ensuring right to self-determination and world peace was greatly influenced by writings on western rationalistic philosophy, especially by those of Immanuel Kant, John Stuart



Mill, and Herbert Spencer. His global political vision also correlated with the political philosophy of Vladimir Lenin, Woodrow Wilson, Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi. He was an outspoken and sincere leader for establishing the right to self-determination of people worldwide. Thus, in his speech at the UN General Assembly in 1974, he stated: "Millions of freedom fighters from Asia, Africa, and Latin America had to sacrifice to achieve the promise of self-control that the UN Charter promises. This struggle is still going on. The war is going on against the unlawful occupation of areas by the exercise of muscle and the abuse of power to vitiate the equitable rights of the people and against racism. Injustice is still rampant in many parts of the world." Bangabandhu was highly critical about the role of world leaders in regard to ensuring rights and political freedom of people in occupied nations; he strongly uttered that, "Our Arab brothers are still fighting for the complete abolition of the invaders from their land. The equitable national rights of the Palestinian people have not yet been achieved....the people of Zimbabwe and Namibia are still engaged in the final struggle for national independence and absolute freedom." His bitter utterance is still prevailing globally. Vengeance, killing, hatred, ultra-nationalism, fascism, imperialist mentality, slaughter of democratic values and principles, forceful deportation of people, millions of refugees and homeless people, are increasing all over the globe. Current incidences in Myanmar, India, Syria, Yemen and many other countries show the ugly face of world leaders against poor and powerless people. Dr. Islam pointed out that, surprisingly, such a strong voice from world leaders against this oppression and human rights violation was not being seen at present what Bangabandhu uttered many decades ago.

In the current global context, the sense of 'We' versus 'They', minority vs. majority in terms of religion, ethnicity and political belief has been generating conflict, polarization and hatred instead of forming brotherhood and cooperation. This emerging division between and among nations across the world is leading to carnage of innocent and peace-loving people. According to Dr. Islam, the vision of Bangabandhu is an urgent need to stop such bloodshed, killing and hate game across the world. Bangabandhu wanted to see a balanced and equitable world system, and therefore, suggested socialism as the system to change the world. He believed that, "The capitalists were quite bent on waging a world war to achieve their goals." It was quite clear that the capitalist mode of production and competition for resources among capitalist states and multi-national corporations (MNCs) was playing major role in waging war in many corners of the world. What is being seen in Myanmar, Syria, Libya, Yemen and other parts of the world, is the game of capitalist states for extracting natural resources and guaranteeing their arms trade at the cost of human rights. Bangabandhu was critical about the evil of capitalism, and rightly cautioned everyone about the costs of this system.

The speaker added that Bangabandhu's vision for establishing peace is incomparable. He attended the Peace Assembly in China and strongly supported the principle saying, "We want peace, not war." He envisioned, "We will not move towards a world filled with hunger, poverty, unemployment, fear of starvation, fear of being completely destroyed by nuclear war, we will look to a world where humanity is capable of great success in the era of astounding advances in science and technology." He was truly a visionary leader who believed in the advancement of science and technology as the key to development and world peace. He appealed, therefore, to the people of newly liberated countries to come forward and work for world peace. He also echoed the importance of forming public opinion and urged to form human chain for abolishing nuclear weapons, oppression, exploitation, forced migration, deportation, and killing of innocent people. As his vision was set for a just and war-free world, he believed in maintaining neutral role in world politics. He declared that Bangladesh would be the "Switzerland of the East"; by this declaration, he meant the country would not join any party and remain nonpartisan in the Cold War between the US and the USSR. Until his death, he maintained neutrality, with the principle of friendship to all and malice to none. He initiated also to form a medical team and self-supporting group with ex-war participants for helping Egyptian soldiers during the Arab-Israel War (1973). His vision has a strong influence on current peacekeeping missions of Bangladesh formed in 1988. Now, Bangladesh is the second largest peacekeeping force contributor in the world. Indeed, he first felt the need of attending peace promoting missions by sending assistance of medical teams to Egypt.

In concluding the speech, Dr. Islam mentioned that Bangabandhu was a farsighted philosopher, thoughtful and visionary world leader. His vision was not confined within Bangladesh but went beyond national boundary in forming public opinion for the right to self-determination and world peace. He was a courageous human being who valued democratic public reasoning deeply and worked accordingly. Dr. Islam opined that succeeding generations must flexibly, wisely and cooperatively apply the principles he left behind to prevent global crises and move towards a brighter future for future generations. Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu.

Thanking Dr. Islam for the presentation, Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari said it could be understood that Bangabandhu at the core of his heart, was a humanist. If humans are trotting all over the globe, it is no



wonder that his entire contextuality would be the global context. It is also found in Bangabandhu's book that when the newly independent nation of Pakistan secretly chalked out a military alliance with the US, he did not hesitate about saying that Pakistan was doing a mistake. As a new nation, militarization would not be its priority, rather development should be. Bangabandhu definitely had a very clear vision regarding development. This vision was embedded in equality and justice, nondiscrimination and economic wellbeing of people. He dreamt of a world where all human beings would coexist irrespective of class, race, religious identities and would also come forward for helping each other in their grief and sorrows. He had always been vocal against any repression of common people and discrimination between the rich and poor.



Dr. Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee

Professor, Department of Economics, University of Dhaka

Dr. Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee expressed his gratitude to the organizers and said he was proud to be a part of the seminar which gave him the opportunity to speak on Bangabandhu's vision of development, equity and justice. He regarded this as a privilege as it would help him learn many things about the Father of the Nation and his book, *The Unfinished Memoirs*. Earlier, he had gone through the book but did not think about it deeply; this seminar however, gave him the opportunity to do so. As part of his research methodology, he concentrated all his findings on *The Unfinished Memoirs*. As an economist, he explored how equity and justice were thought about and delivered in the write up of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Reflecting on Bangabandhu's vision of equity and justice, Dr. Siddiquee spoke about the meaning of equity, justice, difference between equity and equality. Equality basically means equal opportunities provided to all. But Bangabandhu termed it as equity which has deeper insight rather than equality in a sense that when equality is talked about, it means varying opportunity should be provided depending on the needs. That means Bangabandhu believed in need based assessment. Dr. Siddiquee opined that opportunity should be there but for those who need it most. Previously, it was believed that equality was best; however, sometimes equality cannot open up the opportunities, visions and catch the visions. In that case, equity is a more of a reflection of justice. In order to make distributive justice, equity is needed. Here, he brought up the case of providing subsidy. In his view, more benefits would be achieved if disadvantaged segments of population would be provided with more subsidies rather than the richest segment. That was the basis of equity in terms of justice. On this note, he cited an example from *The Unfinished Memoirs* regarding the **Muslim Seba Samiti**. It was formed in 1937 by **Kazi Abdul Hamid** (Msc), aimed at helping Muslim students from poor families by providing stipend, financial assistance and relevant exam expenses. Soon after his death, Bangabandhu took over the responsibility of the group and ran it for a long time. At that time, he collected rice from rich Muslim families and sold that at market to disburse money to poor students. From an economic perspective, such redistribution from existing resources in a kind of progressive tax system, is justice to the society in terms of providing access to school by poor students. Redistribution of income creates more benefit and wellbeing for society. Here, Dr. Siddiquee cited the example of utility of money stating that the utility of one taka is different between the rich and the poor. Despite having the same resource, if it could be redistributed from the richest to the poorest, more wellbeing could be created. This philosophy and perspective could help reduce inequality, income inequality, interclass division and finally, establish the right and justice for the poor.

Another case he brought out from the book was about the Bengal Famine of 1943 and role of Bangabandhu in dealing with the crisis. This famine did not arise from lack or shortage of food, rather, stockpiling of goods to sell at higher prices, which was proven by Dr. Amartya Sen in his book. Dr. Siddiquee viewed that the famine reflected the problem of distribution since during that time, high prices, debts, hunger, black market, etc were hugely prevalent. Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy was the Civil Supply Minister at that time. He urged to take necessary steps for this, established a big civil service department at the initiative of Bangabandhu and also control over *Longorkhanas*. Bangabandhu participated in such relief activities directly and observed the sufferings of common people. In that context, he aimed to conduct a conference in South Bengal so that leaders could observe the scenario and develop ideas on how to tackle the situation. Implications of this from an economic perspective were: distributive justice could be achieved, and at the same time, business ethics were important to reduce the suffering of the commons. Self-dedication and motivation were also important. Bangabandhu tried to establish the vertical power relationship which is important in the time of distress. This incident also showed that coordination and cooperation acted as a coping strategy.

The speaker also focussed on the situation of the India-Pakistan divide where there were more sufferings of the masses, increased corruption, food shortage, looting of industries in West Pakistan, discrimination, no or least care provided to the then East Pakistan; Karachi was the capital city despite being the minority, widespread discrimination in job placing including in the military and use of East Pakistan's foreign currency to build industries in West Pakistan. All these led to frustration among people in the East; they demanded for exploitation-free society, social and economic development. Bangabandhu struggled to be free from the exploitation and independence was the ultimate outcome. Although these are not mentioned in his autobiographical book as it ended much earlier, he himself mentioned such things.



To discuss Bangabandhu's development philosophy, Dr. Siddiquee quoted some of his statements and their implications. First quotation was, "If leaders do mistake while leading, it incurs huge costs for the public." This means urgency of ideal leadership is important for overall development. Secondly, he quoted, "Those who work do few mistakes, but those who don't work can make no mistake." This implies that all should work for progress and learning-by-doing, i.e., the practice of error-learning method. If some mistakes were done, those would be corrected but people would need to engage themselves in work. The third statement was,

“People have the right to protest any kind of injustice activity done by a leader”, which means people have the right to protest if leaders commit mistake. He further quoted, “Autocracy arises in the absence of strong opposition.” This proves Bangabandhu was in favour of strong opposition as it is important for development, and democracy cannot function without strong opposition. Next quotation was, “Well-being of the people comes at the cost of sacrifice by the political leaders”. It was mentioned many times in *The Unfinished Memoirs* that if someone wanted to be a leader, mindset of sacrifice would be essential; otherwise, no good could be done for the commons.

The quotation “An independent country without freedom of public opinion is a matter of distress” means the freedom of public opinion should be valued. Dr. Siddiquee also referred to a quotation, “All we are human being irrespective of religions”, which was mentioned by Dr. Rafiqul Islam. He went on to cite more quotes of Bangabandhu, e.g., “When the ruler himself becomes exploiter or helps exploiter to exploit, it brings melancholies to public”, “Incongruous political leaders try to maximize their own interest, rather than the interest of the country”, “Unity requires leaders belonging to same ideology” and “Leadership in the absence of qualities like integrity, accountability, empathy, humility, resilience, vision, influence, and positivity destroys the economy.” That is why a good or ideal political leadership is important for development. He also mentioned a statement which Bangabandhu learnt from his father Sheikh Lutfar Rahman, i.e., ‘sincerity of purpose and honesty of purpose’. Bangabandhu kept his father’s statement in mind until his death. That is why he in one case got the justice. He was titled as “Peacekeeper instead of Peacebreaker”. With this, Dr. Siddiquee concluded his presentation.

Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari thanked Dr. Siddiquee for his insightful delivery, particularly, for pointing out the age-old debate between equality and equity which Bangabandhu had always tried. He has



myriads of contributions to the nation. The Director General said if he himself would be asked, he would first and foremost pick the one up which the honourable Foreign Minister was alluding to in the inaugural session. There was nationalism present, but people of this country could not indentify that. It was Bangabandhu who identified that people of this land were a nation. As far as the concept of nationalism would go, it would be much easier to read the textbooks and understand various elements—primordial and instrumental ones, their interactions and easy to pass the exams. But when it would come to reality, surely would be much more complicated than one could think or see.



Dr. Syed Anwar Husain

Bangabandhu Chair Professor, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)

Dr. Syed Anwar Husain said the word Bangali could not be translated into English as Bengali; consequently, this lecture should be on Bangali nationalism. As a phenomenon and discipline, nationalism owes much to history. This is the perspective in which renowned British historian Eric Hobsbawm once said to an audience of anthropologists:

“Historians are to nationalism what poppy-growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market. Nations without a past are contradictions in terms. What makes a nation is the past, what justifies one nation against others is the past, and historians are the people who produce it. So, my profession, which has always been mixed up in politics, becomes an essential component of politics.”

Dr. Husain decided, therefore, to talk about Bangali nationalism as an essential ingredient in the creation of Bangladesh; and which, as history bears testimony, was imbibed, espoused and represented by Bangabandhu. For him, nationalism was not mere romanticism, but more of a tool to craft a new future for the people beholden to a nationalist psyche. Historically, however, there had been a nation in being; Bangabandhu made the right use of this nationhood to craft the desired statehood. As it is, nationhood precedes statehood; and both of which are products of a long historical process. It is at the same time, worth mentioning that, Bangabandhu singlehandedly countered the sham Pakistani nationalism by successfully promoting the cause of Bangali nationalism. He then went on to the next section of the lecture titled *Nationalism: what it is all about*, where he took a few leaves out of the vast literature that existed on nationalism to create a relevant theoretical framework for discussing Bangabandhu and Bangali nationalism. To comprehend Bangabandhu's brand of nationalism, little bit of theoretical background would be necessary. Dr. Husain did not suggest that Bangabandhu had the theoretical grounding first before he postulated. Indeed, the empiricism of his nationalism was contextualized in theoretical terms. Hence, the speaker initially drew attention to a relevant theoretical discourse, followed by some leads on Bangabandhu's brand of nationalism.

Both as an ideology and movement based on such ideology, nationalism promotes the interests of group of people with the aim of gaining and maintaining their autonomy and sovereignty over their homeland. It holds that each nation has the right to decide its political future free from outside interference. Moreover, in its prime task, nationalism seeks to build a single national identity based on shared social characteristics such as culture, language, religion and belief in a shared singular history. The overriding aim of nationalism is to promote national unity and solidarity. Here he referred to political scientist **Benedict Anderson** who called nations as “Imagined Communities.” Anderson meant that the historical elements common to a group of people were imagined to constitute a nation. Thus, nationalism is a matter of psyche of a group of people.

Dr. Husain classified nationalism as civic, ethnic and liberal. He said these were his own classifications and would not be found in any textbook. Civic nationalism defines the nation as an association of people who identify themselves as belonging to the nation, who have equal and shared political rights, and allegiance to similar political procedures. This nationalism denies ethnic ancestry and accepts political identity as the core identity. Ethnic nationalism, also known as ethno-nationalism, by contrast, is a form of nationalism wherein a nation is defined in terms of ethnicity. The central theme of ethnic nationalism is, nations are defined by shared heritage. One subtheme in such nationalism is, a nation consists of all speakers a specific language, which is called linguistic nationalism. Civic nationalism was represented by what he termed as the so-called Pakistani nationalism which tried to subsume all historical elements of nationhood. Ethno-nationalism, to some extent and to a great extent, was represented by Bangali nationalism. But he argued Bangali nationalism had some other constituting elements. Liberal nationalism is a kind of non-xenophobic nationalism that goes with the liberal values of freedom, tolerance, equality and individual rights, not only in a specific territory, but across the world as well. Such a brand of nationalism is coterminous with internationalism, which transcends nationalism and advocates a greater political or economic cooperation among nations and peoples. The term is similar to globalism and cosmopolitanism. As a political ideal, it is based on the belief that nationalism should be transcended as the ties that bind people of different nations are stronger than those separating them.

It is suggested that these theoretical postulations vis-à-vis nationalism were found to have empirical ramifications as Bangabandhu's nationalism was analyzed. Bangabandhu was the epitome of Bangali nationalism and Bangali nationalism, as generally misperceived, was not a unilinear construct. Mostly it is said that the present-day Bangladesh was standing on linguistic nationalism. But Dr. Husain said it had other constituting elements. Initially, this was a linguistic nationalism, but was found, gradually, to have thrived on ethnographic and geographic elements also. Later on, it assumed other elements, Bangali nationalism was thus tridimensional in construct and focus, of which, Bangabandhu was the perfect embodiment. In his speeches and statements, he always represented the multidimensional construct of Bangali nationalism. His trust with nationalism had two phases. During the first phase up to the birth of Bangladesh, he led his people who wrestled to counter the sham civic nationalism of Pakistan with Bangali nationalism. During the second phase between 1972 and 1975, he kept one foot solidly at home—nationalism; but extended the other to transcend to internationalism. In both phases, he was non-xenophobic, although he had ample reasons to be so, at least, he should have anti-Pakistani vitriol. But he neither uttered any such vitriol, nor undertook any xenophobic action. These actions provide evidence that he certainly believed in and practiced liberal nationalism. Therefore, when Bangali nationalism and Bangabandhu's nationalism would be discussed, that should be qualified by adding the adjective “liberal nationalism”.

In the second part of his presentation, Dr. Husain said the relevant theoretical framework would help understand how much of this construct would apply to Bangabandhu and his activities. Here he cited an oft-quoted statement of Bangabandhu, a very important declaration by the great leader, representing the core elements of Bangali nationalism—“Even when walking the gallows, I shall say I am a Bangali, Bangla is my language, Bangla is my land.” Dr. Husain did all the English renderings of Bangabandhu's speeches and statements in the paper as he had gone through all those but was very unsatisfied with the quality of English. Even the book demonstrated by the honourable Foreign Minister, *The Unfinished Memoirs*, he said was full of bad, wrong and incorrect translations. Hence, Dr. Husain relied on himself for translation. Although not known to him, Bangabandhu was representing the essential components of Bangali nationalism as he shared his psyche; as it was, this statement sufficiently indicated the tridimensional composition of this nationalism—ethnicity, language and geography. The extent of his links to the geographic element of the land he lived and toiled in, was amply demonstrated on 25 August 1955, when he took the floor in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly to

say, “Sir, you will see that they [Pakistan Government] want to place the words ‘East Pakistan’ instead of ‘East Bengal.’ We have demanded so many times that you should make it Bengal. The word ‘Bengal’ has a history, has a tradition of its own. You can change it only after the people have been consulted. If you want to change it then we will have to go back to Bengal and ask them whether they accept it.” It was not only an attachment to a traditional geographic entity that Bangabandhu spoke for, but also argued for a democratic process for decision-making. A democrat by conviction is bound to anchor his political faith in liberal nationalism. Early in the 1960s, besides being the General Secretary of the Awami League, Bangabandhu had his own project—the **Purba Banga Mukti Front** (East Bengal Liberation Front), for liberating his people from the clutches of Pakistani internal colonialism. He had leaflets printed at his own cost; but nowhere in that leaflet, was there any anti-Pakistani rhetoric. Reticence is a human quality most necessary in politics; and Bangabandhu appeared to possess it.

The much touted **Six-Point Programme** of 1966 was a crafty formula apparently for democratizing the state structure of Pakistan as per the Lahore Resolution of 23 March 1940. For the then East Pakistan, there was, however, more quantum of politico-economic and military autonomy; for which, the Bangali people hailed the document as their Magna Carta. But the underlying intent, as divulged to the NAP (pro-Moscow) leader Professor **Muzaffar Ahmed** by Bangabandhu, was independence. As Bangabandhu confided in, “Don’t you understand, I have one point only said in a roundabout way?” Bangabandhu had the habit of speaking in his regional dialect whenever he was driven by emotion. There are however, many statements of Bangabandhu to this effect although Dr. Husain mentioned just one; for example, **Abdur Razzaq**, the front ranking Chhatra League leader, very dear to Bangabandhu, approached him and asked the question—“You have encouraged us, the students, to drum up support for independent Bangladesh by working clandestinely. Now I see you are talking about simple autonomy. What is the matter with you?” Bangabandhu placed his left hand on the back of Mr. Razzaque and said, “I made the bridge for you to go to the other side.” Mr. Razzaq informed Dr. Husain that he had no further question about the intent and purpose of the Six-Point. **Syed Shamsul Haque**, the all-rounder litterateur, who worked with the BBC at that time, asked Bangabandhu the same question. Bangabandhu, again, very sarcastically, raised his three fingers and said he in reality, had three points—1. How much had the Pakistanis taken? 2. How much should they reimburse? 3) When would they leave this country? This was exactly the language in which the BBC broadcast that interview and Dr. Husain himself listened to that. With all these cryptic comments, it is now absolutely clear what were the intent and purpose of the Six-Point programme. This was a document so relevant in challenging Pakistan by the Bangali ethno-nationalism; but, again, no harsh word was used against Pakistan. Conversely, Ayub Khan, the then military dictator of Pakistan, in his knee-jerk reaction, threatened to use arms to silence Bangabandhu. With hindsight, it might be presumed that he grasped the underpinning of the Six-Point programme.

On 05 December 1969, Bangabandhu, on behalf of the people, declared that the name of the province be Bangladesh, which was greeted with thunderous applause. The next day, **Maulana Bhasani** and **Ataur Rahman Khan**, the two senior politicians, endorsed the declaration. In this declaration, geography appeared prominently as an element in Bangali nationalism. To put history in perspective, it might be mentioned that during the Mass Uprising of 1969, the youth had brought the words ‘Independent Bangladesh’ for the first time to public attention by chanting the slogan: “Brave Bangalis, take up arms, make Bangladesh independent.” Dr. Husain was a part of it being a final year student at Dhaka University. Two other slogans of this movement were also pointers to nationalism; and these were: “who are you, who am I? Bangali, Bangali” (ethnicity); “Dhaka or Pindi? Dhaka, Dhaka” (geography). Moreover, when the brave Bangalis were exhorted to take up arms to wrest freedom, then history and tradition were invoked. History, as mentioned in the beginning, is always the source of nationalist thinking. The economic disparity consequent upon the exploitative Pakistani rule was

perhaps the strongest determinant of Bangali nationalism; this was demonstrated during the 1970 general elections campaign. The Awami League circulated a poster with the captivating title, “Why is Golden Bengal a Graveyard?” This poster made an economic comparison between the two wings of Pakistan with some boxed figures, to show the price and quota; for instance, revenue expenditures in East Pakistan were Rs. 15 billion while those were Rs. 50 billion in West Pakistan. That poster also decided Pakistan’s fate and victory of the Awami League. In fact, Bangabandhu’s leadership was crucial in ensuring landslide victory of his party. Result of this election was the peak of Bangali nationalism, and Bangabandhu emerged as the sole spokesman of his nationalism, and also of the people rallying behind that ideology.



As per this election result, Bangabandhu and his party were supposed to form the government at the centre, but this was not to be as Yahya, Bhutto and the Pakistan military conspired to do something otherwise. This denial to the Awami League of its legitimate right was, in reality, a betrayal of the Bangali people; this was a factor that turned the crescendo nationalism into a strident one with Bangabandhu riding the crest. A turning point for the confused and dithering Bangali people arrived as Bangabandhu delivered his defining 7th March speech. This speech had duration of 18 minutes and 31 seconds with 1,108 words. Books also come up with time factors/limits, like 20, 22, 23 minutes but as per Dr. Husain's watch, it lasted 18 minutes and 31 seconds and he would hold on to this claim. This speech defined the future of the Bangali nation when, in a staccato sentence, it was said, “This time the struggle of ours is for emancipation, this time the struggle is for independence.” Even under an intense pressure of circumstances, Bangabandhu refrained from unilateral declaration of independence, xenophobia, and on the contrary, exhorted his people with such fiery words like, “As we have given blood, we will give more blood and liberate the people of this land, Insha Allah.” Some days ago, in the Asiatic Society, a speaker spoke on the linguistic analysis of the speech. He spoke really well. Dr. Husain told him that he commented upon Bangabandhu’s use of Bengali language in the speech and wanted also to know about his comments regarding the utterance of an Arabic word by Bangabandhu in the same

speech. That speaker could not say anything, possibly wanted to avert it. However, there is no scope to omit any word or punctuation mark from Bangabandhu's speech of 7th March. He had uttered "Insha Allah" because in *Surah Qahaf*, Allah says that when humans (not only Muslims) make any pledge, they must utter "Insha Allah". Bangladesh became independent because Bangabandhu uttered "Insha Allah". He would often utter this word. He had only one car in his entire life. He did not have any other vehicle than the one government allotted him. His driver Mr. **Haji Morshed** is still alive, about 90 years of age now. Dr. Husain spoke with him some days ago. The car's number plate was GA-1. On 7th March, he was taking Bangabandhu via the Sat Masjid Road; when the car turned left towards Jhigatola, Haji Morshed asked him, "What will you speak today? You do not have any paper with you today in your pocket." Bangabandhu looked upwards and said, "I will speak whatever Allah would make me speak today. You need not worry." What Allah made him speak on that day, became history worldwide. He could recite the *Quran* with correct pronunciation. His friend Maulana **Sheikh Abdul Halim** bore this out. Bangabandhu would regularly say the Fajr (morning) prayer, and a Quran would be always beside his bed. But that Quran also became bullet-ridden on 15th August.

Although not a direct declaration for independence, Bangabandhu's speech of 7th March was subsequently considered as the most effective declaration for independence, as remarked by the UNESCO. He once again proved his reticence and farsightedness as well. Through this speech, he proved himself capable of holding a strident nationalism on leash, and that too under a most provocative scenario.

In the third section, the speaker said that on 10 January 1972, Bangabandhu gloated over the independence of his country as he said smugly, "Today I have desire of my life fulfilled; Bangladesh is independent." It was a spontaneous, unwritten and impromptu speech that lasted 35 minutes, again, as per Dr. Husain's watch. In fact, with independence, Bangali nationhood culminated into statehood; this was also the crowing glory for the man who had piloted nationalism to such a finale. This speech indicated the ideological orientation of the just-born state and made overtures to the international community for recognition and assistance. As for the country's ideological orientation, Bangabandhu stated, "Bangladesh will be an ideal state, the basis of which will not be religion; the basis of the state will be democracy, socialism and secularism (at the time of writing the constitution, nationalism was added as the fourth principle)." His non-xenophobic nationalism was pronounced as he outlined the future of Bangladesh-Pakistan relationship in such succinct words as, "You live in peace. We will have nothing to do with you. Even in death, Bangalis will not part with independence. I wish you well. You accept that we are independent. You remain independent."

The constitution is the way a state is required to tread in crafting domestic and foreign policies. When Bangabandhu said, "friendship for all, malice to none" and "Bangladesh will be Switzerland of Asia", these became the underlying principles of Bangladesh's foreign policy to be enshrined in relevant constitutional provisions. On 12 October 1972, the draft constitution was placed in the Constituent Assembly. On this occasion, while explaining the four fundamental principles of the state, Bangabandhu shared his ideas specific to nationalism in the following words: "I would like to say something about this nationalism. There is something that goes with say language, civilization and culture; and this is a feeling. No nation can be great without this feeling, and nationalism cannot grow without this feeling. There are many nations in the world who are nations despite the fact that they are multilingual. There are countries in the world, who despite their linguistic and religious affinity, are heterogeneous nations; they have failed to be a single nation. Nationalism depends on a feeling. I am a Bangali, because I have this feeling."

This was a perfect definition of nationalism. In conceiving nationalism along such lines, Bangabandhu appeared to have echoed Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" construct, and that of **Rupert Emerson's** "nations in hope." It needs to be mentioned that this feeling was non-xenophobic, inclusive, and transcended

to internationalism. Bangabandhu's internationalism was, however, prefaced by regionalism, wishing well for peoples nearby home in South Asia. On 06 February 1972, on his trip to Kolkata, he pleaded for South Asian cooperation as he said, "Let there be an end, once and for all, to the sterile policy of confrontation between neighbours. Let us not fritter away our notional resources, but to use them to lift the standard of living of our people." He repeated the same theme in a speech he delivered on 4th of March 1974 at Daudkandi in Comilla. At the Commonwealth Summit of Heads of Governments held in Ottawa on 02-03 August 1973, he appeared eloquent on world peace as he said: "I believe that both the developed and developing countries have an overriding common interest in survival and peace. The arms race remains a threat to mankind. Inherent in it is not only the threat of total destruction, but also colossal wastage of the earth's resources. Can we not do something to divert these resources so that they may contribute to alleviating human suffering and advancing human welfare? Can we not concert our efforts to contribute to creating an environment of peace in the world?"

At the 4th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of non-aligned countries held in Algiers on 06-09 September, he renewed the call for world peace as he said, "I pledge that Bangladesh will always stand behind all those who are struggling for national liberation in Africa, Asia and Latin America." Pointing at the global system, he uttered the stunning words in his thunderous voice: "The world is divided between those who are oppressors and those who are oppressed. I am on the side of the oppressed." On 25 September 1974, he addressed the 29th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in Bangla. His use of Bangla there showed his unflinching commitment to his mother language and nationalism associated with it. In **The Unfinished Memoirs**, he wrote about his love of mother language: "Every race loves its mother language. No nation has tolerated any attempt to insult its mother language." It may be mentioned that, back in 1952, he also spoke in Bangla at the Asia-Pacific Regional Peace Conference held in Beijing. Here, Dr. Husain said that more information in this regard would be found in the newly published book **আমার দেখা নয়া চীন** (*The New China as I saw it*). To return to Bangabandhu's UNGA speech, peace was a theme that was reiterated as he said, "Our total commitment to peace is born of the realization that only an environment of peace would enable us to mobilise and concentrate all our energies and resources in combating the scourges of poverty hunger, disease, illiteracy and unemployment."

In conclusion, Dr. Husain said that as a perfect embodiment of Bangali nationalism, Bangabandhu picked up the Rabindra sangeet "Amar Sonar Bangla Ami tomoe bhalobashi" (my golden Bengal I love you) as Bangladesh's national anthem. As is obvious, this sangeet eulogizes the motherland in glowing terms. But as piloted by Bangabandhu, this nationalism was a recipe for people's welfare both at home and across the world. Once the Bangali nationhood culminated into statehood, Bangali nationalism transcended to the world with its intrinsic ethos of self-assertion by the exploited people. With Bangabandhu, therefore, Bangali nationalism broadened itself into internationalism, a perfect liberal nationalism. Moreover, this was not a xenophobic and jingoist nationalism abhorred by **Rabindranath Thakur**. Here, Dr. Husain said that the English had caricatured Thakur's name by anglicizing it as Tagore. Thakur is a Sanskrit word which means "most respected person". But Tagore is not found in Sanskrit dictionary and thus would mean nothing; yet, Rabindranath accepted the Anglicization and used also to write his own name as Tagore. Such practices are very demeaning, Dr. Husain said. He concluded the presentation by thanking everyone.

Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari, thanked Dr. Husain for the insightful and intriguing deliberation. He referred to the classification of nationalism, i.e., civic, ethnic and liberal, and also tridimensional nationalism as a framework which were elaborated by the speaker. General Bari also reflected on Dr. Husain's comment that the essence of Bangabandhu's nationalism was non-xenophobic, which meant it was not based on religion and at its core, there laid socialism, secularism and democracy.

Open Discussion



Lieutenant General (retd.) Harun-Ur-Rashid thanked the presenters for their deliberations and thus making him more knowledgeable than before. To crystallize his idea of Bengali nationalism, he said to Professor Anwar that he was a hardened Bengali and would remain so. In this Janapada, Bengal had existed for about 800 years; in 1757, the empire was lost when Nawab Siraj ud-Daulah was defeated and Bengal, Bihar, Odisha were being uttered very proudly. The words Bangla and Bengal were used instead of Bangladesh. After Britain occupied this region and at the beginning of the 20th century when the question of division of Bengal came up, it was West Bengal and East Bengal then. When Pakistan came into being, it remained as East Bengal. But when the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was created, East Bengal was renamed as East Pakistan. Thus, with these transformations, history was brought back up to 1952 when the Islamic Republic was created, and all remained Bengali. But from 1952 onwards till 1971, it got back from Bengali to Muslim. In Bangabandhu's statement, sometime in the 1960s, probably between 1962 and 1964, he named this land as Bangladesh in an informal discussion, for the first time. From then onwards, this name proceeded. General Harun strongly felt that the very seed of Bengali nationalism was sown in 1948, when Muhammad Ali Jinnah declared that "Urdu shall be the only national language of Pakistan." The senior brothers, the forefathers protested and said, "no, no, no". Since then, when Bengalis had been fighting for the Bengali language, **বাঙালী জাতীয়তাবাদের উন্মেষ হয়েছে এবং তা ধাপে ধাপে অগ্রসর হতে হতে আমরা মুক্তিযুদ্ধে পৌঁছেছি**। He specifically mentioned the war cry of 1971, whether it could be called the national slogan or not, was only one—**জয় বাংলা**. Here, he said he would challenge all freedom fighters, if there was any other slogan than this for achieving victory over Pakistan. Accordingly, with that, Bengalis brought independence and liberation. But he was a little confused with the fact that he had now to write his nationality as Bangladeshi. As a teacher, researcher, historian, he said Dr. Husain brought all to a limit where "জাতির পিতা categorically বলেছেন আমি বাঙালী, তারপরে বলেছেন এই জনপদে হিন্দু, বৌদ্ধ, খ্রিস্টান, মুসলিম সবাই বাঙালী।" In the constitution of 1972, which was accepted unanimously and acclaimed worldwide, Bengali nationalism had been described elaborately and Dr. Husain also described it in a similar manner. General Harun therefore, questioned: when historically, geographically, ethnically, culturally, people of this country proved that they were Bengalis, how did it then transform from Bengali to some other words and why was he forced now to write anything other than Bengali? Referring to Dr. Siddiquee's discussion on equality and equity, he said Bangabandhu also fought for equity and justice, but where were equity and equality in the society at present?

In response, Dr. Syed Anwar Husain said that General Harun was a freedom fighter himself and he could very well understand the emotion linked with whatever he said about Bangladesh. Historically speaking, the undivided Bengal was called *Gouro Bongo* until the mid-15th century. Shamsuddin Elias Shah was the first Muslim independent sultan of Bengal, who began calling this land Bangalah and also assumed the titles Sultan-i-Bangaliya, Shah-i-Bangaliya. Both the words Bangla and Bangali originated from him. In 1757, the British East India Company began to call this land Bengal Presidency. There is a lot of history how they changed the name into "Bengal" from "Bangalah". And then afterwards, it could be seen in Bengali literature that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee called the undivided Bengal Bongodesh. Rabindranath referred to the land as Sonar Bangla, and Kazi Nazrul Islam called it Bangladesh; here, Dr. Husain referred to an article published in 1942 in the *Nobonur* which mentioned, "Joy Hok Bangalir, Joy Hok Banglar" by Nazrul Islam. When the constitution of Pakistan was adopted

n 1956, Pakistan was called the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. During that time, the name of this land was changed from East Bengal to East Pakistan. Bangabandhu protested this in the constituted assembly. Dr. Husain added that General Harun was right as Bangabandhu said the word 'Bengal' had a history and tradition. But Pakistan did not have those; like the United States of America has no history; it is the only nation in the world which has no history. Their history started from 1624, when the East Coast was colonized by the disgruntled English people who wanted to escape the religious persecution at home.

About the *Joy Bangla* slogan, Dr. Husain said General Harun was very right. The term literary meant Glory to the Land. In this regard, geography came in as a fundamental element of nation. The Joy Bangla slogan was coined on 15 September 1969 at the Madhur Canteen and he was a witness to that. The late professor Dr. **Aftab Ahmed** was the first man to declare the slogan. He was then an activist of student league and used to reside at the Jinnah Hall which is now Surja Sen Hall where Dr. Husain also stayed. One day, Dr. Aftab suddenly chanted the slogan Joy Bangla. Everybody was stunned. **Chishty Shah Helalur Rahman**, who hailed from the same district as of Dr. Husain and was two years his junior, also raised the slogan twice, Joy Bangla, Joy Bangla. That stunned everyone again. Dr. Husain said history would not support him to say that Dr. Aftab was definitely influenced by Nazrul's article-poem, Joy Hok Bangalir, Joy Hok Banglar. Because, he did not say anything like that and Dr. Husain did not also have time to ask him. But in a write-up presented at the Kobi Nazrul University, Dr. Husain suggested that Joy Bangla was linked with the rebel poet Nazrul's ideas. It was the war cry, as one would be taught in the army, Joy Bangla. This slogan aimed actually to galvanize people, and no other slogan could do that.

Regarding the question of citizenship, Bangali and Bangladeshi, he opined that Bangladesh in fact, is not a nation-state in an academic sense. It has 98.02% Bangalis and the rest is constituted by as many as 50 national entities. Bangabandhu's nationalism was very inclusive. People of Bangladesh, could very well be Bangali in their national identity, but when Bangladeshi nationalism would be dubbed, Dr. Husain said he would have strong arguments against that. One could not have nationalism overnight by fixing a label to something. Nationalism grows over thousands of years through shared history, culture and tradition. Bangali nationalism had grown over ages. Here, he referred to historian **Kenneth Robert Minogue**, who wrote a simple, short book on nationalism which was one of his textbooks during his studies at the University of Edinburgh. Title of that book was Nationalism and in the beginning, contained a sentence like this, "Nationalism, as the story goes, begins like a fairytale, ends like the Frankenstein Monster." Bangladesh was the perfect case of Minogue's statement. The word 'Bangladeshi' denoting Bangladeshi nationalism was ahistorical. It had no history and in fact, defied history. Rather, Bangali, Bangalittwa were true history.



Dr. Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee said that a question could arise in everyone's mind about where Bangladesh was now in terms of having equity and justice. Basically, dreams of Bangabandhu were really nice: the way he thought, planned and wanted to build the country but reality was completely different. If people of Bangladesh wanted to match that, there would only be frustration to a great extent, in a sense. For example, if the poverty scenario was looked into, just from the household income-expenditure survey last coming in 2016, it represented the district level poverty for the first time ever in Bangladesh. According to that survey, the most poverty prone division is Rangpur. Within Rangpur, Kurigram had the highest prevalence of poverty, about 71-72 per cent. It was a totally frustrating scenario for Bangladesh. Conversely, Narayanganj had the least poverty prevalence. Such disparity in terms of poverty, in different divisions, creates conflict. On inequality, he said people would often talk about income inequality which was measured by the Gini Coefficient but that had been raised already to 0.482, which was very high. If it would be raised to 2.50, that would create tension and conflict in society. Additionally, value judgement would worsen considerably and that was happening in society if people

would take a look in terms of corruption. He then questioned if there were justice regarding corruption in the society. The answer would be 'no' in most cases. Therefore, problems of governance and accountability are major concerns that should be focussed on. In terms of per capita income, Bangladesh was seeing a growth but this would not mean all had been attained. What should be done in that regard? The per capita income growth would mean Bangladesh's financial institutions also improved. Why should the country's people be frustrated then, regarding banks or non-banking financial institutions, despite per capita income had doubled in last 5-6 years? That should be an issue of concern. Problems in the country involving accountability, corruption, and governance would require to be addressed seriously, to make the dreams of the Father of the Nation come into reality. On the question of policymaking about what should be done, he said, as a teacher and researcher, he found the gap between researchers and those who would implement the policy, to be huge, as their dimensions were separate. If one did a good research and made some policy concern regarding the issue, that would not be implemented. In fact, there was a lack of industry versus research. That should also require to be addressed seriously.



Mohammad Kamal Uddin, former ambassador, informed that he and Dr. Syed Anwar Husain were classmates. The blessed birthday of the Father of the Nation was only two days away although the countdown had begun since 10th January. Despite a worldwide pandemic going on, all those attending the seminar were very lucky to gather in such an excellent programme, he said. He also praised Dr. Siddiquee for his comments on equity, justice, gaps between researchers and those who would implement their suggestions/recommendations. He said Dr. Husain had brilliantly discussed all aspects relating to Bangabandhu in his presentation. He suggested people of Bangladesh must uphold Bangabandhu's principles and values, if they want to pay true respects to him. Any deviation from those, which was regularly happening, would render such programmes to mere formalities. Here, ambassador Kamal told of his personal acquaintance with Dr. Aftab Ahmed and Chishty Helalur Rahman as well. On liberal nationalism, he asked Dr. Husain if he thought it was producing some kind of radicalization; one might become liberal, but the root of extremist incidents like the Holey Artisan Attack, had not been eliminated yet. There were 15th August (1975), 21st August (2004), and many more could occur; the 26th March (Independence Day) was approaching. Therefore, would such soft/flexible nationalism be paving the way for brainwashing by any means?

Dr. Husain thanked ambassador Kamal and said he was building a theoretical framework and observing whether this framework could be applicable in the case of Bangabandhu. He was building theories from his works. Theories are built from facts and they are applied in real conditions as well. The way he was observing Bangabandhu, through his deeds, speeches and statements, compelled him to brand him nothing but as a liberal nationalist. One might like that or not, but a limitation of practicing history is, the practitioner's hands and feet are tied to information. That person might think many things, but must be reliant on information-based philosophy. Based on this, Dr. Husain identified Bangabandhu as a liberal nationalist. Otherwise, he would always have xenophobia or hostility in him towards foreigners. None of his speeches or statements contained any anti-Pakistan vitriol. Even in the speech of 7th March, he said, "As we have given blood, we will give more blood", but did not speak of taking blood. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose said, "You give me blood, I will give you independence." Bangabandhu spoke about sacrificing blood for the sake of independence, asked all to be prepared with whatever they had, fortify every household. He told about subduing the enemy by all means but never spoke of shedding their blood. He did not speak against Pakistan even for a single time.

Here Dr. Husain referred to Sirajul Alam Khan, the leader of *Nucleus*, who formed the organization in 1962 and had a cyclostyled newspaper called *Swadhin Purbo Bangla* which was to be secretly distributed during

his student years. Sometime in the 1960s, Bangabandhu told Mr. Khan, when he was pressing for independence, “I am not adventurist, I am not impatient.” It was a very important statement. Therefore, Dr. Husain would always begin discussions about Bangladesh and the Language Movement with Bangabandhu, based on information. He did not believe what was written in books that the language movement began on 11th March 1948 or after Jinnah’s speech of making Urdu the national language. It should also be remembered that on 18th August 1947, in Kolkata, Bangabandhu while gossiping at the editor’s rooms of the *Weekly Millat*, said Bengali should be the state language of Pakistan as it was the language of the majority. On 1st September of that year, the Tamaddun Majlis was organized on the question of state language. On 15th September, they published a leaflet/book titled, “Pakistaner Rashtra Bhasha: Bangla na Urdu?” In November, 3rd and 4th grade employees of the Palashi Barrack brought out procession against postcards which would contain writing in Urdu and English then; they questioned why not Bengali? But this procession had been removed from history of language movement; the same happened with Bangabandhu’s contributions to the movement. Writers of history of the language movement included **Badruddin Umar** and **Ahmed Rafiq**. Despite being a soldier of language movement himself, Ahmed Rofiq deleted Bangabandhu and the aforementioned procession from history. Nevertheless, Dr. Husain could find their mentions in history. The language movement began from 1947, indeed. In this regard, he spoke about a book he wrote, published from **Ekushey Bangla**, for which he undertook extensive research and mentioned the original history of the movement. But unfortunately, few would read the book as he was not a writer leaning towards mass entertainment. The *Bangladesh Protidin* published **Bhasha Andoloner Sothik Itihaas** in their first column on 19th February 2020. The language movement was the beginning of the country’s self-identification and symbol of cultural distinction. Hence, Dr. Husain spoke on linguistic nationalism. But when it would be said Bangladesh was standing on such nationalism, other elements might be receiving lesser attention like there were anthropology, geography, economics, and history. Nationalism is always a blend of all these elements and cannot be formed with one element only. If the Arabic language were the basis for nationalism (linguistic), then why are there so many different states in the Middle East, where they all speak Arabic? Under that same logic, why are Bangladesh and West Bengal different? The concept of United Bengal was good which was initiated on 27th April 1947; but it did not go far and had a different history.

General Harun said the East Bengal Regiment was formed on 15th February 1948. A tea party was arranged 15 minutes after its formation and going on. The then governor, and the general officer commanding (GOC), General Muhammad Ayub Khan were present there. Two Bengali officers at the party, Major **Abdul Gani** and Major **Yousuf** said Bengali soldiers in Pakistan would speak in Bengali language from then on. When they said this, Ayub Khan rebuked them both and ousted Major Yousuf from the party. This was also a crucial step for establishment of Bengali language.

Dr. Husain said that in 1948, at the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, **Dhirendra Nath Datta**, demanded Bengali be given equal status besides Urdu and English at the assembly. But in a speech on 25th February that year, premier **Liaquat Ali Khan** verbally abused him and rejected that proposal. Dr. Husain said the language movement has very long history and thanked General Harun for the important information he provided.

Dr. **Mahfuz Kabir**, Research Director, BISS, appreciated Dr. Muhammad Shahadat Hossain Siddiquee for shedding lights on distributive justice and progressive taxation that Bangabandhu nurtured and implemented after the independence of Bangladesh. Throughout his life, he thought of the situation of the poor and oppressed people, particularly of those in the eastern wing of Pakistan. He always preferred development from below, tried to improve education, health and nutrition condition of the majority of the people who belonged



basically to the peasant community. Those were some of his priority areas of development when he established the Planning Commission of Bangladesh and formulated the first five year plan of the country. Moreover, lots of development thoughts and avenues of Bangabandhu are also visible in the commission's documents. Dr. Kabir, however, disagreed with Dr. Siddiquee's comments on governance and developmental issues that would effectively address the issues of inequality, were not impressive now. He said the Planning Commission's documents and developmental policies specifically mention that inequality exists but the government also has firm commitment to address it. Accordingly, these initiatives of government should be taken into account. Existing policies of the government are not deviated from Bangabandhu's thoughts and commitments. He then mentioned issues like multidimensionality of poverty which was thought of by Bangabandhu, but is still in the policy and there is no discontinuation.



In reply, Dr. Siddiquee said that Bangabandhu had different thoughts on different perspectives. Moreover, his review was *The Unfinished Memoirs*, which includes Bangabandhu's description of events before 1947 and up to the mid-1950s. One should have to go rigorously through it for knowing what is in there. Here, Dr. Siddiquee mentioned about the Muslim Seba Samiti that he brought in the beginning of his study. What was its purpose? Bangabandhu wanted to contribute to education for the poor. He worked for the marginalized. There remained the need of knowing how to define marginalization as it could have different forms—in terms of having access to

education, services, food and many more. Dr. Siddiquee already mentioned these in his report and was not confident. As an empirical researcher, he was not concerned about policies,

but believed in what was happening in reality. That meant what data said. Here, he suggested looking into the inequality data from 1973-2018. It showed an upward sloping. He also suggested looking into what economist **Simon Kuznets** said about inequality and growth. As per Kuznets, "Until and unless we have relationship between growth and inequality moving in the same direction, we are at the initial stage of development." Bangladesh reached the lower-middle income level but that could not be said in theoretical definition, because according to Kuznets, the country was still at the early stage of development. Dr. Siddiquee addressed policies which had very good notes and other things. Nonetheless, if that was not reflected, that would be quality. This is why Bangabandhu mentioned about quality of

leaders. Bangladesh has leaders and good documents, but still requires good characteristics and ideal leaders with ideology that would help reduce inequality. He concluded by saying that until and unless that could happen, things would remain definitely frustrating for him.



Professor **Touhida Faruki**, former director general, Directorate of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Women's and Children Affairs, Bangladesh, thanked Dr. Siddiquee for explaining equity and equality very well. Equality as a general term, might not imply each and everyone while equity would be based on need. Stressing on the importance of research, she said she did many research but it involved money, time and energy as well. Therefore, if there was significant gap between research and implementation, that must be minimized, as researchers would spend money, time and energy. But their works would be of no use and only remain on paper, if those could not be implemented in society. Researchers should provide their guidelines and recommendations to proper authorities, policymakers or those who would implement the policies.



Summing up by the Moderator



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

Major General Md Emdad Ul Bari said that he was taking home only a few words from the session. First and foremost, he understood from discussions of the session that the core of everything of Bangabandhu, deep inside his heart and mind, was one word and that is 'humanism'. As nationalism is a complicated subject itself, Bangabandhu's nationalism was a subset of humanism and there was no element in his nationalism which lay outside humanism. If that could be understood, what Bangabandhu was trying to achieve in his nationalism, could possibly also be understood, whether it was from fairytale to Frankenstein or other things. If humanism is the basis of his nationalism, in that case, General Bari said he agreed with Dr. Husain, that there was definitely a strong liberal element in Bangabandhu's nationalism. However, the consequences of that thought, whether radicalization or deradicalization, might require some consideration and study. It is not only the concept of nationalism that all should be concerned about. The next step according to General Bari was development of the nation, and that must be equitable development. He expressed caution on the concept of equity, which itself is a very complex matter, a wicked problem, and there might be a separate session on it. He underscored one observation from the seminar that there were men of thoughts and men of affairs, but there always lay gaps between these two. He was concerned that if man of thoughts would not bother about politics, then thoughts, policies and actions would always remain in three apexes; they would not combine, and rather need a third kind of people or organizations like BISS to come and mediate in order to reduce this gap among the four elements.

General Bari also highlighted audacity. He said he would like to still go back reconfirmed, reassured that audacity was the term Bangabandhu wanted to manifest, because he said, "If you do not stand up for what you think is right, even development is not possible. Even for the development and achieving your right you should stand up boldly." According to General Bari, the Padma Bridge is just a manifestation of the thing Bangabandhu was trying to say.

He expressed heartfelt gratitude to the learned discussants and particularly the audience; moreover, on a different note, he said this was the beginning of a series of seminars on Bangabandhu that BISS would be arranging in this Mujib Borsho, with an intention of publishing a book on 26th March next year. It was the beginning of the process, and opinions of all would find their place. He thanked all for their encouragement and active participation.

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