

## ❖ Operation Searchlight :

Operation Searchlight was the ruthless and brutal armed operation undertaken by the Pakistan army on 25 March 1971 in order to curb the movement of the freedom loving Bangalis against the autocratic rule of the Pakistani rulers. It was termed as 'Operation Searchlight' by the military authority. The purpose of this operation was to arrest or kill the distinguished Awami League leaders, student leaders and Bangali intellectuals in the main cities of the then East Pakistan including Dhaka, to disarm the Bangali personnels of military, para military and police forces and to capture armoury, radio station and telephone exchange, thereby to take over the control of the province of East Pakistan by ruthlessly curbing the non-cooperation movement headed by Bangabandhu sheikh mujibur rahman.

## ❖ Preparation for Genocide :

Genocide conducted by Pakistani soldiers on the night of 25th March, 1971 in the then East Pakistan was named "Operation search light." Though this operation started on the night of 25th March, its preparation had started of the beginning of March. A Ship named M.V. Swayat loaded with arms and weapons reached Chittagong port from West Pakistan on 3rd March. President Yahiya stayed at Dhaka from 15-24th March in the name of discussion with Bangabandhu; but actually he stayed at Dhaka to supervise the preparation of Operation Search light. **Major General Rao Farman Ali, Major General Khadim Hossain Raja, General Tikka Khan was the main planner of operation searchlight.**

The following measures were scheduled to be taken under Operation Searchlight:

- The operation shall be started simultaneously in the whole of East Pakistan.
- Maximum number of politicians and student leaders, teachers and extremist activists of cultural organisations shall have to be arrested.
- The operations in Dhaka shall have to be made a cent percent success. To that end the Dhaka University shall have to be captured.
- All sorts of domestic and international communications must be disrupted. Telephone exchange, radio, TV, teleprinter service, transmitter in the foreign consulates must be disrupted.
- In the first phase, the operational zones will be Dhaka, Khulna, Chittagong, Comilla, Jessore, Rangpur, Syedpur and Sylhet. The operation planning in Chittagong, Sylhet, Jessore, Rangpur and Comilla shall be implemented by air, if necessary.

❖ Genocide by operation search light :

Pakistani soldiers came out at the streets from Dhaka Cantonment at 11.30 pm. on 25th march. A procession in support of liberation became the first target of Pakistani soldiers at Farmghate. At the same time, attack was carried on at Peelkhana and Rajarbagh police line. At 1-30 am they arrested Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from his residence. At dead of night they launched operation at the residential quarters of the teachers of Dhaka University including the then Iqbal Hall, Jagannath Hall, Rokeya Hall and killed a huge number of students

including nine teachers. Under the same planning, serious attack was made on old Dhaka, Tejgaon, Indira Road, Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Dhaka airport, Ganaktuli, Dhanmondi, Kalabagan, Kathalbagan etc. In the same night many people were killed and injured in Chittagong by the firing of the army. The Pak army launched indiscriminate attack and created havoc within the very month of March under the 'Operation Searchlight' having their post at the cantonment. The offices of the dailies like the Ittefaq, Sangbad and the Peoples were set on fire for their support to the movement of the Bangalis. A good number of journalists, media personnels were burnt to death.

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## ❖ 7<sup>th</sup> March Speech :

The 7 March Speech was a historic speech given by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Founding Father of Bangladesh on 7 March 1971 at the Ramna Race Course (now Suhrawardy Udyan) in Dhaka. In the speech, Bangabandhu informally declared independence of Bangladesh, proclaiming: "The struggle this time, is a struggle for our liberty. The struggle this time, is a struggle for our independence."

### **He gave four pre-conditions in his speech :**

1. Withdrawing martial law.
2. Handing over power to people's representatives.
3. Inquiries into mass killing by the army.
4. Taking the soldiers back to the barrack.

## ❖ Background of 7<sup>th</sup> March Speech :

Pakistan was created in 1947, during the Partition of India, as a Muslim homeland in South Asia. Its territory comprised most of the Muslim-majority provinces of British India, including two geographically and culturally separate areas, one east of India and the other west. The western zone was popularly (and, for a period, officially) called West Pakistan; the eastern zone (modern-day Bangladesh) was called East Bengal and later renamed East Pakistan under the One Unit Scheme. West Pakistan dominated the country politically, and its leaders exploited the East economically, leading to popular grievances.

In 1966, the Awami League, led by Sheikh Mujib, launched the Six Point Movement to demand provincial autonomy for East Pakistan. The Pakistani establishment rejected the league's proposals, and the military government arrested Sheikh Mujib and charged him with treason in the Agartala Conspiracy Case. After three years in jail, Mujib was released in 1969, and the case against him was dropped in the face of mass protests and widespread violence in East Pakistan.

In 1970, the Awami League, the largest East Pakistani political party, won a landslide victory in national elections, winning 167 of the 169 seats allotted to East Pakistan and a majority of the 313 seats in the National Assembly. This gave it the constitutional right to form a government. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party and a member of the Sindhi ethnic group, refused to allow Sheikh Mujib to become prime minister. Instead, he proposed having two prime ministers, one for each wing.

On 3 March, the convening of the National Assembly was postponed until 25 March, leading to an outcry across East Pakistan. Violence broke out in Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangpur, Comilla, Rajshahi, Sylhet, and Khulna, and the security forces killed dozens of unarmed protesters. There were open calls for Sheikh Mujib to declare independence from Pakistan, and the Awami League called a large public gathering at Dhaka's Ramna Race Course on 7 March to respond.

Following is the full text of Sheikh Mujib's address to the nation delivered on the day before a mammoth gathering:

My dear brothers...

I have come before you today with a heavy heart.

All of you know how hard we have tried. But it is a matter of sadness that the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Rangpur and Rajshahi are today being spattered with the blood of my brothers, and the cry we hear from the Bengali people is a cry for freedom, a cry for survival, a cry for our rights.

You are the ones who brought about an Awami League victory so that you could see a constitutional government restored. The hope was that the elected representatives of the people, sitting in the National Assembly, would formulate a Constitution that would assure the people of their economic, political and cultural emancipation.

But now, with great sadness in my heart, I look back on the past 23 years of our history and see nothing but a history of the shedding of the blood of the Bangali people. Ours has been a history of continual lamentation, repeated bloodshed and incessant tears.

We gave blood in 1952, we won a mandate in 1954. But we were still not allowed to take up the reins of this country. In 1958, Ayub Khan clamped martial law on our people and enslaved us for the next 10 years. In 1966, during the Six-Point Movement of the masses, many were the young men and women whose lives were stilled by government bullets.

After the downfall of Ayub, Mr. Yahya Khan took over with the promise that he would restore constitutional rule, that he would restore democracy and return power to the people.

We agreed. But you all know of the events that took place after that...

I ask you, are we the ones to blame

As you know, I have been in contact with President Yahya Khan. As leader of the majority party in the National Assembly, I asked him to set February 15 as the day for its opening session. He did not accede to the request I made as leader of the majority party. Instead, he went along with the delay requested by the minority leader Mr. Bhutto and announced that the Assembly would be convened on the 3rd of March.

We accepted that, agreed to join the deliberations. I even went to the extent of saying that we, despite our majority, would still listen to any sound ideas from the minority, even if it was a lone voice. I committed myself to the support of anything to bolster the restoration of a constitutional government.

When Mr. Bhutto came to Dhaka, we met. We talked. He left, saying that the doors to negotiation were still open. Moulana Noorani and Moulana Mufti were among those West Pakistan parliamentarians who visited Dhaka and talked with me about an agreement on a constitutional framework.

I made it clear that we could not agree to any deviation from the Six Points. That right rested with the people. Come, I said, let us sit down and resolve matters.

But Bhutto's retort was that he would not allow himself to become hostage on two fronts. He predicted that if West Pakistani members of Parliament were to come to Dhaka, the Assembly would be turned into a slaughterhouse. He added that if anyone were to participate in such a session, a countrywide agitation would be launched from Peshawar to Karachi and that every business would be shut down in protest.

I assured him that the Assembly would be convened and, despite the dire threats, West Pakistani leaders did come down to Dhaka.

But suddenly, on March 1, the session was cancelled.

There was an immediate outcry against this move by the people. I called for a hartal as a peaceful form of protest and the masses readily took to the streets in response.

And what did we get as a response?

He turned his guns on my helpless people, a people with no arms to defend themselves. These were the same arms that had been purchased with our own money to protect us from external enemies. But it is my own people who are being fired upon today.

In the past, too, each time we, the numerically larger segment of Pakistan's population tried to assert our rights and control our destiny, they conspired against us and pounced upon us.

I have asked them before that how can you make your own brothers the target of your bullets?

Now Yahya Khan says that I had agreed to a Round Table Conference on the 10th. Let me point out that is not true.

I had said, Mr. Yahya Khan, you are the President of this country. Come to Dhaka, come and see how our poor Bangali people have been mown down by your bullets, how the laps of our mothers and sisters have been robbed and left empty and bereft, how my helpless people have been slaughtered. Come, I said, come and see for yourself and then be the judge and decide. That is what I told him.



Earlier, I had told him there would be no Round Table Conference. What Round Table Conference, whose Round Table Conference? How do you expect me to sit at a Round Table Conference with the very same people who have emptied the laps of my mothers and my sisters?

On the 3rd, at the Paltan, I called for a non-cooperation movement and the shutdown of offices, courts and revenue collection. You gave me full support.

Then suddenly, without consulting me or even informing us, he met with one individual for five hours and then made a speech in which he turned all the blame on me, laid all the fault at the door of the Bangali people.

The deadlock was created by Bhutto, yet the Bangalis are the ones facing the bullets! We face their guns, yet it's our fault. We are the ones being hit by their bullets, and it's still our fault!

So, the struggle this time is a struggle for emancipation, the struggle this time is a struggle for independence!

Brothers, they have now called the Assembly to a session on March 25, with the streets not yet dry of the blood of my brothers. You have called the Assembly, but you must first agree to meet my demands. Martial law must be withdrawn; the soldiers must return to their barracks; the murder of my people must be redressed. And, power must be handed over to the elected representatives of the people.

Only then will we consider if we can take part in the National Assembly or not.

Before these demands are met, there can be no question of our participating in this session of the Assembly. That is the right that not given to me as part of my mandate from the masses.

As I told them earlier, Mujibur Rahman refuses to walk to the Assembly treading upon the fresh stains of his brothers' blood!

Do you, my brothers, have complete faith in me...?

... Let me then tell you that the Prime Ministership is not what I seek. What I want is justice, the rights of the people of this land. They tempted me with the Prime Ministership but they failed to buy me over. Nor did they succeed in hanging me on the gallows, for you rescued me with your blood from the so-called conspiracy case.

That day, right here at this racecourse, I had pledged to you that I would pay for this blood debt with my own blood. Do you remember? I am ready today to fulfil that promise!

I now declare the closure of all the courts, offices, and educational institutions for an indefinite period of time. No one will report to their offices, that is my instruction to you.

So that the poor are not inconvenienced, rickshaws, trains and other transport will ply normally except serving any needs of the armed forces. If the army does not respect this, I will not be responsible for the consequences.

The Secretariat, Supreme Court, High Court, Judges courts, and government and semi-government offices shall remain shut. Only banks may open for two hours daily for business transactions. But no money shall be transmitted from East to West Pakistan. The Bangali people

must stay calm during these times. Telegraph and telephone communications will be confined within Bangladesh.

The people of this land are facing elimination, so be on guard. If need be, we will bring everything to a total standstill...

Collect your salaries on time. If the salaries are held up, if a single bullet is fired upon us henceforth, if the murder of my people does not cease, I call upon you to turn every home into a fortress against their onslaught. Use whatever you can put your hands on to confront this enemy. Every last road must be blocked.

We will deprive them of food, we will deprive them of water. Even if I am not around to give you the orders, and if my associates are also not to be found, I ask you to continue your movement unabated.

I say to them again, you are my brothers, return now to the barracks where you belong, and no one will bear any hostility toward you. Only do not attempt to aim any more bullets at our hearts: It will not do any good!

... And the seven million people of this land will not be cowed down by you or accept suppression any more. The Bangali people have learnt how to die for a cause and you will not be able to bring them under your yoke of suppression!

To assist the families of the martyred and the injured, the Awami League has set up committees that will do all they can. Please donate whatever you can. Also, employers must give full pay to the workers who participated in the seven days of hartal or were not able to work because of curfews.

To all government employees, I say that my directives must be followed. I had better not see any of you attending your offices. From today, until this land has been freed, no taxes will be paid to the government any more. As of now, they stop. Leave everything to me. I know how to organise a movement.

But be very careful. Keep in mind that the enemy has infiltrated our ranks to engage in the work of provocateurs. Whether Bangali or non-Bangali, Hindu or Muslim, all are our brothers, and it is our responsibility to ensure their safety.

I also ask you to stop working in radio, television and the press if these media do not report news of our movement.

To them, I say, 'You are our brothers. I beseech you to not turn this country into a living hell. Will you not have to show your faces and confront your conscience some day?

If we can peaceably settle our differences there is still hope that we can co-exist as brother. Otherwise there is no hope. If you choose the other path, we may never come face one another again.

For now, I have just one thing to ask of you: Give up any thoughts of enslaving this country under military rule again!

I ask my people to immediately set up committees under the leadership of the Awami League to carry on our struggle in every neighbourhood, village, union and subdivision of this land.

You must prepare yourselves now with what little you have for the struggle ahead.

Since we have given blood once, we will give more of it. But, Insha'Allah, we will free the people of this land!

The struggle this time is for emancipation! The struggle this time is for independence!

Be ready. We cannot afford to lose our momentum. Keep the movement and the struggle alive because if we fall back they will come down hard upon us.

Be disciplined. No nation's movement can be victorious without discipline.

Jai Bangla! Jai Bangla!

### **❖ The Importance of 7<sup>th</sup> March Speech :**

- This speech inspired all the people of the country to fight for liberation.
- This speech united the people and encouraged them to accept maximum sacrifice for the country.
- This speech magically transformed the Bangalee masses into a nation of Bangladesh heroes.
- The rule of Bangabandhu was established everywhere except in the cantonments.
- On 30 October, 2017 Unesco has recognised the historic 7th March Speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as a part of the world's documentary heritage.
- The 7<sup>th</sup> March speech inspired the Bengalis to unite movement.

- It provides the direction of Guerrilla warfare .
- It plays an important role for the preparations of our independence war.
- It creates Bengali nationalism.
- It awakens democratic aspirations.
- Through his speech on 7 March, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman became one of the undisputed leaders of Bengal.

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## **❖ Mujibnagar Government :**

The Provisional Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, popularly known as the Mujibnagar Government, was established following the declaration of independence of East Pakistan on 10 April 1971. It was the supreme leadership of the Bangladeshi liberation movement.

As the Pakistan military force started genocide on 25 March of 1971, the people of East Pakistan posed resistance against them initially without any preparation and organizational movement. In order to administer the liberation war efficiently the first provisional government of Bangladesh was formed on 10 April. The formal swearing in ceremony was held on 17 April at Vaidynathtala in Meherpur district. A large number of local and foreign journalists and other dignitaries was attended in this ceremony. This government was headed by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The village Vaidynathtala was named Mujibnagar after his name and the provisional government also came to be popularly termed as Mujibnagar government. However, the aircraft of Pakistan Air Force bombed at Mujibnagar and took control of it just after two hours of formation of this government. Hence, the headquarters of Mujibnagar government was shifted to 8 Theatre Road in Kolkata.

## **The Mujibnagar Government :**

- President : Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman
- Vice President : Syed Nazrul Islam (the Acting President, in absence of

- Bangabandhu)
- Prime Minister : Tajuddin Ahmed
- Finance Minister : M. Masur Ali
- Home, Agriculture, relief and Rehabilitation Minister : A. H. M. Kamruzzaman
- Foreign, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister : Khondokar Moshtaq Ahmed
- Commander in Chief : Colonel (Rtd.) M. A. G. Osmani
- Chief of Staff : Lt. Colonel (Rtd.) Abdur Rob
- Deputy Chief of Staff : Group Captain A. K. Khondokar

There were 12 portfolios or divisions of the provisional Government of Bangladesh. During the war all civil and military administration was run by these divisions.

### **Role of Mujibnagar government in our Liberation War :**

- The Mujibnagar government united the scattered and isolated Bengali nation in different parts of Bengal during the liberation war.
- From 1947-1971, the Pakistani ruling class repeatedly bowed to the student movement. So the Mujibnagar government united the student society to conduct the war of liberation properly.



- The Mujibnagar government set up training centers and provided training in different parts of Bengal during the liberation war.
- Divided Bangladesh into 11 sectors to lead the war.
- During the War of Liberation, the Mujibnagar government established diplomatic relations with the outside world by sending delegates to various countries including India, United States, United Kingdom, France and Soviet Union.
- Creates public opinion in favor of liberation war.
- Conducts media during the war of liberation.
- Conducts civilian activities