

English translation:

Bangladesh is now an independent sovereign state. We might have been known as independent before 26th March (1971), but we were mainly subjugated. The Punjabi dictators were the ones who ruled with supremacy, and they dominated the politics. On the 26th of March, 1971, we broke free from being suppressed and became a free sovereign state. That is the reason why this day is so memorable for us. We celebrate this day with due respect every year. In the 1970 national elections, the Bangladeshi (then East Pakistani) party Awami League had earned an absolute majority of the votes, yet they were not allowed to govern the state. Instead of that, they (West Pakistan) started making excuses and playing conspiratorial games against us. They crushed democracy, and rather than giving the power to the person who won the absolute majority of the votes, they actually arrested him on the dark night of 25th March, 1971, and flew him to the Pakistani capital via a special plane and locked him up there. He was escorted by the Pakistani Prime Minister of that time and some other ministers. Before they went, they ordered their army to massacre the Bengalis in East Pakistan. Without any consideration, they attacked and killed many innocent Bengalis, set their houses on fire and pillaged the whole country. They made all the arrangements to wipe out Bangladeshi people from the face of this earth. But the Bengalis did not give up hope, and neither were they ready to compromise. On the 26th of March, they announced their independence from West Pakistan and became an independent state named Bangladesh, and people from all walks of life -- old, young, laborers, officers and students -- all joined the Liberation War.

Since we announced our independence from Pakistan on the 26th of March and started the war, that day is honored as the Independence Day of Bangladesh. Three million people sacrificed their lives in this war, wealth worth billions of taka [Bangladeshi currency] was looted, and millions of houses were destroyed. There have been liberation wars in Turkey, China and Algeria, but none have been as detrimental and bloody as the Bangladesh Liberation War. Still, we have to consider this our luck -- that after nine long months of battle, we managed to defeat the conquering army and achieve independence. On the 16th of December 1971, the opposition army surrendered and we were introduced to the world as an independent country. On the 26th of March, 1972, Bangladesh celebrated her first anniversary.

Since then, this day is commemorated every year as Independence Day. On this day, all the schools, colleges, government and private offices and institutions of the country are closed. To honor Independence Day, a special routine is followed by educational institutions. The national flag is hoisted in the Dhaka Stadium; the army demonstrates military parades, and many exhibitions take place. In the early morning hours, people join processions to the nearest *Shaheed Minaar*,¹ the *Jatiyo Smritishoudho*² in Savaar, and the

¹ Monument dedicated to the martyrs of the Language Movement 1952.

² The National Martyrs' Memorial monument.

*Shaheed Buddhijibi Mazhaar*³ to pay their respect to the slain freedom fighters. Prayers are offered for the souls of the martyrs and for the well-being of the country. People also assemble in schools, colleges, and other important institutions of the country to commemorate this day. The national flag is raised and victory processions and conferences and meetings are arranged. Feasts to feed the poor and destitute, and sporting events are arranged. Special prayers are made in mosques, temples and churches. National flags are hoisted on the rooftops of every office and house. In Dhaka, children assemble for special functions. Independence Day is observed with special reverence in the cities, towns and villages of the country. The joy of independence brings a whiff of fresh air into our lives, and everyone promises to build a better country and learn to love their country.

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³ National Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard.