

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (Bengali: শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান; 17 March 1920 – 15 August 1975), shortened as **Sheikh Mujib** or just **Mujib**, was a Bangladeshi politician and statesman. He is called the "Father of the Nation" in Bangladesh. He served as the first President of Bangladesh and later as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh from 17 April 1971 until his assassination on 15 August 1975.^[1] He is considered to be the driving force behind the independence of Bangladesh. He is popularly dubbed with the title of "Bangabandhu" (*Bôngobondhu* "Friend of Bengal") by the people of Bangladesh. He became a leading figure in and eventually the leader of the Awami League, founded in 1949 as an East Pakistan-based political party in Pakistan. Mujib is credited as an important figure in efforts to gain political autonomy for East Pakistan and later as the central figure behind the Bangladesh Liberation Movement and the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971. Thus, he is regarded "Jatir Janak" or "Jatir Pita" (*Jatir Jônok* or *Jatir Pita*, both meaning "Father of the Nation") of Bangladesh. His daughter Sheikh Hasina is the current leader of the Awami League and also the Prime Minister of Bangladesh.

An initial advocate of democracy and socialism, Mujib rose to the ranks of the Awami League and East Pakistani politics as a charismatic and forceful orator. He became popular for his opposition to the ethnic and institutional discrimination of Bengalis in Pakistan, who comprised the majority of the state's population. At the heightening of sectional tensions, he outlined a six-point autonomy plan and was jailed by the regime of Field Marshal Ayub Khan for treason. Mujib led the Awami League to win the first democratic election of Pakistan in 1970. Despite gaining a majority, the League was not invited by the ruling military junta to form a government. As civil disobedience erupted across East Pakistan, Mujib indirectly announced independence of Bangladesh during a landmark speech on 7 March 1971. On 26 March 1971, the Pakistan Army responded to the mass protests with Operation Searchlight, in which Prime Minister-elect Mujib was arrested and flown to solitary confinement in West Pakistan, while Bengali civilians, students, intellectuals, politicians and military defectors were murdered as part of the 1971 Bangladesh genocide. During Mujib's absence, many Bengalis joined the Mukti Bahini and, helped by the Indian Armed Forces, defeated the Pakistan Armed Forces during the Bangladesh Liberation War. After Bangladesh's independence, Mujib was released from Pakistani custody due to international pressure and returned to Dhaka in January 1972 after a short visit to Britain and India.

<div>Bangabandhu</div> <div>বঙ্গবন্ধু</div> <div>Sheikh Mujibur Rahman</div> <div>শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান</div>
 <div></div>
1st <u>President of Bangladesh</u>
<div>In office</div> 17 April 1971 – 12 January 1972
<div>Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad</div>
<div>Vice President Nazrul Islam</div>
<div>Preceded by Position established</div>
<div>Succeeded by Nazrul Islam (Acting)</div>
<div>In office</div> 25 January 1975 – 15 August 1975
<div>Prime Minister Muhammad Mansur Ali</div>
<div>Preceded by Mohammad Mohammadullah</div>
<div>Succeeded by Khondaker Mostaq Ahmad</div>
2nd <u>Prime Minister of Bangladesh</u>
<div>In office</div> 12 January 1972 – 24 January 1975

Mujib became the Prime Minister of Bangladesh under a parliamentary system adopted by the new country. He charged the provisional parliament to write a new constitution proclaiming the four fundamental principles of "nationalism, secularism, democracy, and socialism", which reflect his political views collectively known as Mujibism. The Awami League won a huge mandate in the country's first general election in 1973. However, Mujib faced challenges of rampant unemployment, poverty and corruption, as well as the Bangladesh famine of 1974. The government was criticized for denying constitutional recognition to indigenous minorities and human rights violations by its security forces, notably the National Defence Force or Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini paramilitary. Amid rising political agitation, Mujib initiated one party socialist rule in January 1975. Six months later, he and most of his family were assassinated by renegade army officers during a coup. A martial law government was subsequently established. In a 2004 BBC poll, Mujib was voted the *Greatest Bengali of all time*.^[2]

President	<u>Abu Sayeed Chowdhury</u> <u>Mohammad Mohammadullah</u>
Preceded by	<u>Tajuddin Ahmad</u>
Succeeded by	<u>Muhammad Mansur Ali</u>
Member of Parliament for Dhaka-12	
In office	
7 March 1972 – 15 August 1975	
Preceded by	<i>Constituency Established</i>
Succeeded by	<u>Jahangir Mohammad Adel</u>
Personal details	
Born	17 March 1920 <u>Tungipara, Bengal Presidency, British India</u> (now in <u>Bangladesh</u>)
Died	15 August 1975 (aged 55) <u>Dhaka, Bangladesh</u>
Cause of death	<u>Assassination</u>
Nationality	<u>British India</u> (1920–1947) <u>Pakistani</u> (1947–1971) <u>Bangladeshi</u> (1971–1975)
Political party	<u>Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League</u> (1975)
Other political affiliations	<u>All-India Muslim League</u> (Before 1949) <u>Awami League</u> (1949–1975)
Spouse(s)	<u>Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib</u>
Children	<u>Hasina</u> · <u>Kamal</u> · <u>Jamal</u> · <u>Rehana</u> · <u>Russel</u>

Contents

Early life and education

Political activism in British India

Leader of Pakistan

Early political career

Bengali language movement

The founding of the Awami League

Six point movement

Anti-Ayub movement

1970 elections and civil disobedience

Establishment of Bangladesh

Governing Bangladesh

Struggle for national reconstruction

Economic policies

Foreign policies

Left wing insurgency

BAKSAL

Assassination

Personal life, family, and relatives

Legacy

Bangladesh

Worldwide

Authored books

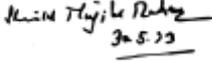
Portrayals

References

Citations

General sources

External links

Mother	<u>Sayera Khatun</u>
Father	<u>Sheikh Lutfur Rahman</u>
Relatives	<u>Sheikh–Wazed family</u>
Alma mater	<u>Islamia College</u> <u>University of Dhaka</u>
Signature	

Early life and education



The house where Mujib was born in Tungipara

Mujib was born in Tungipara, a village in Gopalganj District in the province of Bengal in British India,^[3] to Sheikh Lutfur Rahman, a serestadar (court clerk) of Gopalganj civil court, and his wife Sheikh Sayera Khatun. He was born into a Bengali Muslim family as the third child in a family of four daughters and two sons.^[3]

In 1929, Mujib entered into class three at Gopalganj Public School, and two years later, class four at Madaripur Islamia High School.^[4]

From very early age Mujib showed a potential of leadership. His parents noted in an interview that at a young age, he organized a student protest in his school for the removal of an inept principal. Mujib withdrew from school in 1934 to undergo eye surgery, and returned to school only after four years, owing to the severity of the surgery and slow recovery.^[5]

Later, he passed his Matriculation from Gopalganj Missionary School in 1942, Intermediate of Arts from Islamia College (now Maulana Azad College) in 1944 and BA from the same college in 1947.^[3] After the partition of India, he got himself admitted into the University of Dhaka to study law but could not complete it due to his expulsion from the University in early 1949 on the charge of 'inciting the fourth-class employees' in their agitation against the University authority's indifference towards their legitimate demands. After 61 years, in 2010, the expulsion has been withdrawn terming the expulsion as unjust and undemocratic.^{[3][6][7]}

Political activism in British India

Mujib became politically active when he joined the All India Muslim Students Federation in 1940.^[8]

He joined the Bengal Muslim League in 1943. During this period, Mujib worked actively for the League's cause of a separate Muslim state of Pakistan, and in 1946 he went on to become general secretary of the Islamia College Students Union. M. Bhaskaran Nair describes that Mujib "emerged as the most powerful man in the party" because of his proximity to Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy.^[9]



Mujib (right) with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy in 1949

After obtaining his BA degree in 1947, Mujib was one of the Muslim politicians working under Suhrawardy during the communal violence that broke out in Calcutta, in 1946, just before the partition of India.^[10]

Leader of Pakistan

Early political career

After the Partition of India, Mujib chose to stay in the newly created Pakistan. On his return to what became known as East Pakistan, he enrolled in the University of Dhaka to study law and founded the East Pakistan Muslim Students' League. He became one of the most prominent student political leaders in the province. During these years, Mujib developed an affinity for socialism as the solution to mass poverty, unemployment, and poor living conditions.^[11]

Bengali language movement

Following the declaration of Muhammad Ali Jinnah on 21 March 1948, that the people of East Bengal would have to adopt Urdu as the state language, protests broke out amongst the population.^[12] Mujib immediately decided to start a movement against this former planned decision of the Muslim League. In the same year on 2 March a conference was held at Dhaka University's Fazlul Haq Muslim Hall, with leaders of different political parties. In this conference, discussions about the movement against the Muslim League were discussed. From here on, the decision of the constitution of the All-party Parliamentary Council was decided. The strike was celebrated in Dhaka on 11 March 1948, at the direction of this council. During the strike, some other political activists, including Mujibur, were arrested in front of the secretariat building. But due to pressure from the student protest, Mujib and other student leaders were released on 15 March. On the occasion of their release the Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad (National Language Action Committee) arranged a rally which took place at Dhaka University.^[13] The police blocked this rally. In protesting police activities Mujib immediately announced a nationwide student strike on 17 March 1948.^{[12][14]} On 19 March, he organized a movement aimed at securing the rights of the fourth class employees of Dhaka University. On 11 September 1948 he was again arrested



Rally on 21 February 1954 by Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Mujibur Rahman marching barefoot to pay their tributes to the Language Movement Martyrs

On 21 January 1949, Mujib was released from prison. Out of jail, he again became involved in the demand for the demand of the fourth class employees, for which he was fired from the university. But he refrained from acquiring these fines as illegal. In continuation of this, on 26 April, Muslim League-backed candidate Shamsul Haq won a by-election in Tangail. Mujib hunger striked in front of Vice Chancellor's residence for the success of his movement, for which he was again arrested. At that time he was expelled from Dhaka University. He was accused of leading the movement of the fourth-class workers' rights in the university. On 23 June Suhrawardy and Maulana Bhasani East Pakistan Awami Muslim League. After the formation, Mujib left the Muslim League and joined this new team. He was elected joint general secretary of party East Pakistan. He got out of prison in late June. After release he joined the movement against the food crisis. In September of that year he was temporarily detained for violating Section 144 but was released immediately.^[7]

In early January 1950, the Awami Muslim League held an anti-famine procession in Dhaka on the occasion of the arrival of Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to East Pakistan. Mujib was arrested this time because of his leadership. He was imprisoned for two years. On 26 January 1952, Pakistan's Prime Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin announced that Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan. In spite of being kept in jail after this announcement, Mujib played a special role in organizing protests. He played the role of guiding the state Bengali language movement by issuing instructions from jail. After this it was decided to observe 21 February as the day of recognition for state language. At the same time Mujib decided to observe the fast on 14 February from jail. His fasting lasted 13 days. On 26 February, he was released from jail.^{[3][15][16][17]}

The founding of the Awami League



Mujib with his mentor H. S. Suhrawardy and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in Dhaka, 1957



Mujib (second from left, bottom row) in the cabinet of A. K. Fazlul Huq in East Bengal, 1954

Mujib left the Muslim League to join Maulana Bhashani and Yar Mohammad Khan in the formation of the Awami Muslim League, the predecessor of the Awami League. Maulana Bhashani was elected as president while Yar Mohammad Khan was the treasurer. He was elected joint secretary of its East Bengal unit in 1949. While Suhrawardy worked to build a larger coalition of East Bengali and socialist parties, Mujib focused on expanding the grass-roots organization.^[18] In 1953, he was made the party's general secretary, and elected to the East Bengal Legislative Assembly on a United Front coalition ticket in 1954.^[19] Serving briefly as the minister for agriculture during A. K. Fazlul Huq's government, Mujib was briefly arrested for organizing a protest of the central government's decision to dismiss the United Front ministry.

He was elected to the second Constituent Assembly of Pakistan and served from 1955 to 1958.^[3] The government proposed to dissolve the provinces in favour of an amalgamation of the western provinces of the Dominion of Pakistan in a plan called One Unit; at the same time the central government would be strengthened. Under One Unit, the western provinces were merged as West Pakistan during the creation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1956. That year East Bengal was renamed as East Pakistan as part of One Unit at the same time. Mujib demanded that the Bengali people's ethnic identity be respected and that a popular verdict should decide the question of naming and of official language:

Sir [President of the Constituent Assembly], you will see that they want to place the word "East Pakistan" instead of "East Bengal." We had demanded so many times that you should use Bengal instead of Pakistan. The word "Bengal" has a history, has a tradition of its own. You can change it only after the people have been consulted. So far as the question of One Unit is concerned it can come in the Constitution. Why do you want it to be taken up just now? What about the state language, Bengali? We will be prepared to consider one-unit with all these things. So I appeal to my friends on that side to allow the people to give their verdict in any way, in the form of referendum or in the form of plebiscite.^[20]

In 1956, Mujib entered a second coalition government as minister of industries, commerce, labour, anti-corruption and village aid. He resigned in 1957 to work full-time for the party organisation.^[21]

In 1958 General Ayub Khan suspended the constitution and imposed martial law. Mujib was arrested for organizing resistance and imprisoned till 1961.^[3] After his release Mujib started organising an underground political body called the Swadhin Bangal Biplobi Parishad (*Free Bangla Revolutionary Council*), comprising

student leaders, to oppose the regime of Ayub Khan. They worked for increased political power for Bengalis and the independence of East Pakistan. He was briefly arrested again in 1962 for organizing protests.^[17]

Six point movement

Following Suhrawardy's death in 1963, Mujib came to head the Awami League, which became one of the largest political parties in Pakistan.^[22] The party had dropped the word "Muslim" from its name in a shift towards secularism and a broader appeal to non-Muslim communities. Mujib was one of the key leaders to rally opposition to President Ayub Khan's *Basic Democracies* plan, the imposition of martial law and the one-unit scheme, which centralized power and merged the provinces.^[23] Working with other political parties, he supported opposition candidate Fatima Jinnah against Ayub Khan in the 1964 election.^[24] Mujib was arrested two weeks before the election, charged with sedition and jailed for a year.^[17] In these years, there was rising discontent in East Pakistan over the atrocities committed by the Pakistani Armed Forces against Bengalis, and the neglect of the issues and needs of East Pakistan by the ruling regime.^[25] Despite forming a majority of the population, Bengalis were poorly represented in Pakistan's civil services, police and military.^[26] There were also conflicts between the allocation of revenues and taxation.^[27] The 1965 war between India and Pakistan also revealed the markable vulnerability of East Pakistan compared to West Pakistan.



Mujib announcing the Six Points in Lahore, 1966

Unrest over continuing denial of democracy spread across Pakistan and Mujib intensified his opposition to the disbandment of provinces. In 1966, Mujib proclaimed a 6-point plan titled *Our Charter of Survival* at a national conference of opposition political parties at Lahore,^[3] in which he demanded self-government and considerable political, economic and defence autonomy for East Pakistan in a Pakistani federation with a weak central government.^[23] According to his plan:

1. The constitution should provide for a Federation of Pakistan in its true sense on the Lahore Resolution and the parliamentary form of government with supremacy of a legislature directly elected on the basis of the universal adult franchise.
2. The federal government should deal with only two subjects: defense and foreign affairs, and all other residuary subjects shall be vested in the federating states.
3. Two separate, but freely convertible currencies for two wings should be introduced; or if this is not feasible, there should be one currency for the whole country, but effective constitutional provisions should be introduced to stop the flight of capital from East to West Pakistan. Furthermore, a separate banking reserve should be established and separate fiscal and monetary policy be adopted for East Pakistan.
4. The power of taxation and revenue collection shall be vested in the federating units and the federal center will have no such power. The Federation will be entitled to a share in the state taxes to meet its expenditures.
5. There should be two separate accounts for the foreign exchange earnings of the two wings; the foreign exchange requirements of the federal government should be met by the two wings equally or in a ratio to be fixed; indigenous products should move free of duty between the two wings, and the constitution should empower the units to establish trade links with foreign countries.
6. East Pakistan should have a separate militia or paramilitary forces.

Mujib's points catalysed public support across East Pakistan, launching what some historians have termed the 6-point movement – recognized as the definitive gambit for autonomy and rights of Bengalis in Pakistan.^{[28][29]} Mujib obtained the broad support of Bengalis, including the Hindu populace, and other religious communities in East Pakistan. However, his demands were considered radical in West Pakistan and interpreted as thinly veiled separatism. The proposals alienated West Pakistani people and politicians, as well as non-Bengalis and Muslim fundamentalists in East Pakistan.^{[30][31]}

Anti-Ayub movement

Mujib was arrested by the Pakistan Army and after two years in jail, an official sedition trial in a military court opened. Widely known as the Agartala Conspiracy Case, Mujib and 34 Bengali military officers were accused by the government of colluding with Indian government agents in a scheme to divide Pakistan and threaten its unity, order and national security. The plot was alleged to have been planned in the city of Agartala, in the Indian state of Tripura.^[3] The outcry and unrest over Mujib's arrest and the charge of sedition against him destabilised East Pakistan amidst large protests and strikes. Various Bengali political and student groups added demands to address the issues of students, workers and the poor, forming a larger "11-point plan." The government caved to the mounting pressure, dropped the charges on 22 February 1969 and unconditionally released Mujib the following day. He returned to East Pakistan as a public hero.^[32] He was given a mass reception on 23 February, at Racecourse ground and conferred with the title *Bangabandhu*, meaning *Friend of the Bengal* in Bengali.^[32]

Joining an all-parties conference convened by Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, in 1969, Mujib demanded the acceptance of his six points and the demands of other political parties and walked out following its rejection. On 5 December 1969 Mujib made a declaration at a public meeting, held to observe the death anniversary of Suhrawardy, that henceforth East Pakistan would be called "Bangladesh":

There was a time when all efforts were made to erase the word "Bangla" from this land and its map. The existence of the word "Bangla" was found nowhere except in the term Bay of Bengal. I on behalf of Pakistan announce today that this land will be called "Bangladesh" instead of East Pakistan.^[17]

Mujib's declaration heightened tensions across the country. The West Pakistani politicians and the military began to see him as a separatist leader. His assertion of Bengali cultural and ethnic identity also re-defined the debate over regional autonomy.^[33] Many scholars and observers believed the Bengali agitation emphasised the rejection of the Two-Nation Theory – the case upon which Pakistan had been created – by asserting the ethno-cultural identity of Bengalis as a nation.^[34] Mujib was able to galvanize support throughout East Pakistan, which was home to a majority of the national population, thus making him one of the most powerful political figures in the Indian subcontinent. It was following his 6-point plan that Mujib was increasingly referred to by his supporters as *Bangabandhu*.^{[32][33]}

1970 elections and civil disobedience

On 12 November 1970 a major coastal cyclone the, 1970 Bhola cyclone, struck East Pakistan leaving hundreds of thousands dead and millions displaced. Bengalis were outraged, and unrest began because of what was considered the weak and ineffective response of the central government to the disaster.^{[35][36]} Public opinion and political parties in East Pakistan blamed the governing authorities as intentionally negligent. The West Pakistani politicians attacked the Awami League for allegedly using the crisis for political gain. The dissatisfaction led to divisions within the civil services, police and Pakistani Armed Forces.^{[35][37]}

In the Pakistani general elections held on 7 December 1970, the Awami League under Mujib's leadership won a massive majority in the provincial legislature, and all but two of East Pakistan's quota of seats in the new National Assembly of Pakistan, thus forming a clear majority.^{[38][3][39]}



Mujib campaigning in East Pakistan before the 1970 general election

The largest and most successful party in the western wing of the nation was the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) headed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He was completely opposed to Mujib's demand for greater autonomy.^{[40][41]} Bhutto threatened to boycott the assembly and oppose the government if Mujib was invited by Yahya Khan (then president of Pakistan) to form the next government and demanded inclusion of the PPP. Much of the Pakistani military and the Islamic political parties opposed Mujib becoming Pakistan's prime minister. At the time neither Mujib nor the Awami League had explicitly advocated political independence for East Pakistan, but smaller nationalist groups were demanding independence for Bangladesh.^[42]

Bhutto feared civil war, and sent a secret message to Mujib and his inner circle to arrange a meeting with them.^{[43][44]} Mubashir Hassan met with Mujib and persuaded him to form a coalition government with Bhutto. They decided that Bhutto would serve as president, with Mujib as Prime Minister. These developments took place secretly and no Pakistan Armed Forces personnel were kept informed. Meanwhile, Bhutto increased the pressure on Yahya Khan to take a stand on dissolving the government.^[45]

Establishment of Bangladesh

Following political deadlock, Yahya Khan delayed the convening of the assembly – a move seen by Bengalis as a plan to deny Mujib's party, which formed a majority, from taking charge. It was on 7 March 1971 that Mujib called for independence and asked the people to launch a major campaign of civil disobedience and organized armed resistance at a mass gathering of people held at the Race Course Ground in Dhaka.^{[46][47][48][49]}

The struggle now is the struggle for our emancipation; the struggle now is the struggle for our independence. Joy Bangla!..Since we have given blood, we will give more blood. God-willing, the people of this country will be liberated ... Turn every house into a fort. Face (the enemy) with whatever you have.^{[47][49][50]}

(For more info, see: 7th March Speech of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman)^[51]

Following a last-ditch attempt to foster agreement, Yahya Khan declared martial law, banned the Awami League and ordered the Pakistan Army to arrest Mujib and other Bengali leaders and activists.^[47] The Army launched Operation Searchlight to curb the political and civil unrest, fighting the nationalist militias that were believed to have received training in India. Speaking on radio even as the army began its crackdown, Mujib asked his fellows to create resistance against the Army occupation by telegraph at midnight on 26 March 1971:^[17]

[The] Pakistan Army have suddenly attacked the Pilkhana EPR Headquarter and the Rajarbag Police Line as well as killed many innocents in Dhaka. The battle has started in various places of Dhaka and Chittagong. I am asking help to all the nations of this world. Our freedom fighters are valiantly fighting against the foes to save their motherland. In the name of Almighty Allah my last request and order to you all is to fight for independence till death. Ask your brothers of Police,

EPR, Bengal Regiment and Ansar to fight with you. No compromise, the victory is ours. Execute the last foe from our holy motherland. Carry my message to all the leaders, activists and the other patriots from the every corner of the country. May Allah bless you all. Joy Bangla.

— from *Shadhinota Shongrame Bangali* by Aftab Ahmad^{[52][53]}

Mujib was arrested and taken to West Pakistan after midnight from Tejgaon Airport on a PAF C-130 flight right under the noses of ATC Officer Squadron Leader Khaja, Senior Operations Officer Wing Commander Khademul Bashar and Director of Airport and Flight Security Squadron Leader M. Hamidullah Khan. All were on duty that night due to the state of emergency. Mujib was moved to West Pakistan and kept under heavy guard in a jail near Faisalabad (then Lyallpur).^[50] Many other League politicians avoided arrest by fleeing to India and other countries.^[54] Pakistani General Rahimuddin Khan was appointed to preside over Mujib's military court case in Faisalabad, the proceedings of which have never been made public.^[55]

The Army's campaign to restore order soon degenerated into a rampage of terror and bloodshed.^[56] With militias known as Razakars, the army targeted Bengali intellectuals, politicians and union leaders, as well as ordinary civilians. Due to the deteriorating situation, large numbers of Hindus fled across the border to the neighbouring Indian states of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura.^[57] The East Bengali army and police regiments soon revolted and League leaders formed a government in exile in Kolkata under Tajuddin Ahmad, a politician close to Mujib. A major insurgency led by the Mukti Bahini (*Freedom Fighters*) arose across East Pakistan. Despite international pressure, the Pakistani government refused to release Mujib and negotiate with him. Most of the Mujib family was kept under house arrest during this period. General Osmani was the key military commanding officer in the Mukti Bahini, which was a part of the struggle between the state forces and the nationalist militia during the war that came to be known as the Bangladesh Liberation War. Following Indian intervention in December, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the Pakistani Army surrendered to the joint force of Bengali Mukti Bahini and the Indian Army, and the League leadership created a government in Dhaka which was called the *Mujibnagar Government*.^{[58][59]}

Upon assuming the presidency after Yahya Khan's resignation, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto responded to international pressure and released Mujib on 8 January 1972. After release from prison, Bhutto and Mujib met in Rawalpindi.^[60] In that meeting, Bhutto proposed some links between Pakistan and Bangladesh. However Mujib said he could not commit to anything until he visited Bangladesh and talked to his colleagues.^[61] He was then flown to London where he met with British Prime Minister Edward Heath and addressed the international media at Claridge's Hotel. Mujib then flew to New Delhi on a Royal Air Force (RAF) jet aircraft provided by the British government to take him back to Dhaka. In New Delhi, he was received by Indian President Varahagiri Venkata Giri and Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi as well as the entire Indian cabinet and chiefs of armed forces. Delhi was given a festive look as Mujib and Gandhi addressed a huge crowd where he publicly expressed his gratitude to Gandhi and "the best friends of my people, the people of India".^[62] "From New Delhi, Sheikh Mujib flew back to Dhaka on the RAF jet where he was received by a massive and emotional sea of people at Tejgaon Airport."^{[63][64]}

Governing Bangladesh

Struggle for national reconstruction

Mujib briefly assumed the provisional presidency and later took office as the prime minister.

A new country, Bangladesh, begins with a lot of "rampage and rape of Bangladesh economy" by the Pakistani occupation force. In January 1972 Time magazine reported:

In the aftermath of the Pakistani army's rampage last March, a special team of inspectors from the World Bank observed that some cities looked "like the morning after a nuclear attack." Since then, the destruction has only been magnified. An estimated 6,000,000 homes have been destroyed, and nearly 1,400,000 farm families have been left without tools or animals to work their lands. Transportation and communications systems are totally disrupted. Roads are damaged, bridges out and inland waterways blocked. The rape of the country continued right up until the Pakistani army surrendered a month ago. In the last days of the war, West Pakistani-owned businesses—which included nearly every commercial enterprise in the country—remitted virtually all their funds to the West. Pakistan International Airlines left exactly 117 rupees (\$16) in its account at the port city of Chittagong. The army also destroyed bank notes and coins, so that many areas now suffer from a severe shortage of ready cash. Private cars were picked up off the streets or confiscated from auto dealers and shipped to the West before the ports were closed.^{[65][66]}



Mujib, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, with U.S. President Gerald Ford in 1974

The politicians elected in 1970 formed the provisional Jatiyo Sangshad (parliament) of the new state. The Mukti Bahini and other militias amalgamated to form a new Bangladesh Army to which Indian forces transferred control on 17 March. Mujib described the fallout of the war as the "biggest human disaster in the world," claiming the deaths of as many as 3 million people and the rape of more than 200,000 women.^[66]

Although the state was committed to secularism, Mujib soon began moving closer to political Islam through state policies as well as personal conduct.^[67] He revived the Islamic Academy (which had been banned in 1972 for suspected collusion with Pakistani forces) and banned the production and sale of alcohol and banned the practice of gambling, which had been one of the major demands of Islamic groups.^[67] In his public appearances and speeches, Mujib made increased usage of Islamic greetings, slogans, and references to Islamic ideologies. In his final years, Mujib largely abandoned his trademark "Joy Bangla" salutation for 'Khuda Hafez' preferred by religious Muslims. He also declared a common amnesty to the suspected war criminals, on some conditions, to get the support of far right groups as the communists were not happy with Mujib's regime. He declared, "I believe that the brokers, who assisted the Pakistanis during the liberation war has realized their faults. I hope they will involve themselves in the development of the country forgetting all their misdeeds. Those who were arrested and jailed in the Collaborator act should be freed before the 16 December 1974".^[67] He charged the provisional parliament in order to write a new constitution, and proclaimed the four fundamental principles of "nationalism, secularism, democracy, and socialism," which would come to be known as "Mujibism".^[68] Mujib nationalised hundreds of industries and companies as well as abandoned land and capital and initiated land reform aimed at helping millions of poor farmers.^[69] A constitution was proclaimed in 1973 and elections were held, which resulted in Mujib and his party gaining power with an absolute majority.^[3] He further outlined state programs to expand primary education in Bangladesh, sanitation, food, healthcare, water and electric supply across the country.

Economic policies

The Mujib government faced serious challenges, which including the rehabilitation of millions of people displaced in 1971, organising the supply of food, health aids and other necessities. The effects of the 1970 cyclone had not worn off, and the economy of Bangladesh had been immensely deteriorated by the conflict.^[70] Economically, Mujib embarked on a huge nationalization program. By the end of the year, thousands of Bengalis arrived from Pakistan, and thousands of non-Bengalis migrated to Pakistan; and yet many thousand remained in refugee camps. Major efforts were launched to rehabilitate an estimated 10 million refugees. The economy began recovering and a famine was prevented.^[71] A five-year plan released in 1973 focused state investments into agriculture, rural infrastructure and cottage industries.^[72] But a famine occurred in 1974 when the price of rice rose sharply. In that month there was "widespread starvation started in Rangpur district. Government mismanagement had been blamed for that."^[73] During the Mujib regime the country witnessed, industrial decline, growing Indian control over Bangladesh's industries, and counterfeit money scandals.^[74]

Foreign policies

After Bangladesh achieved recognition from major countries, Mujibur helped Bangladesh enter into the United Nations and the Non-Aligned Movement. He travelled to the United States, the United Kingdom and other European nations to obtain humanitarian and developmental assistance.^[17] Mujibur maintained close ties with India.^[75] He signed the 25-year Indo-Bangladeshi Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace,^[76] which pledged extensive economic and humanitarian assistance and training from India for Bangladesh's security forces and government personnel.^[77] Mujibur forged a close friendship with Indira Gandhi,^[68] strongly praising India's decision to intercede, and professed admiration and friendship for India.^[76] In the Delhi Agreement of 1974, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan pledged to work for regional stability and peace. The agreement paved the way for the return of interned Bengali officials and their families stranded in Pakistan, as well as the establishment of diplomatic relations between Dhaka and Islamabad.^[78]

Mujibur sought Bangladesh's membership in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Commonwealth of Nations and the Islamic Development Bank. He made a significant trip to Lahore in 1974 to attend the OIC summit, which helped improve relations with Pakistan.^[67]

Mujibur was invited to Washington DC and Moscow for talks with American and Soviet leaders. He declared that Bangladesh would be the "Switzerland of the East", meaning that Bangladesh would remain non-partisan in the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.^[79] Many Eastern European countries, particularly Yugoslavia, East Germany and Poland, enjoyed excellent relations with Bangladesh.^[80] The Soviet Union supplied several squadrons of MiG-21 planes for the Bangladesh Air Force.^[81]

Japan became a major aid provider to the new country. Although Israel was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh,^[82] Bangladesh strongly supported Egypt during the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. In return, Egypt gave Bangladesh's military 44 tanks.^[83]

Left wing insurgency

At the height of Mujib's power, left wing insurgents, organized by the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal party's armed wing, Gonobahini, fought against Mujib's government in order to establish a Marxist government.^{[84][85]}

The government responded by forming an elite para-military force, the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini, on 8 February 1972, initially formed to curb the insurgency and maintain law and order.^{[86][87]} The force began a campaign of brutal human rights abuses against the general populace, including becoming involved in numerous charges

of human rights abuse including political killings,^{[88][89][90]} shootings by death squads,^[91] and rape.^[90] Members of the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini were granted immunity from prosecution and other legal proceedings.^{[92][93]} The force swore an oath of loyalty to Mujibur.^[94]

BAKSAL

Mujib's government soon began encountering increased dissatisfaction and unrest. His programs of nationalization and industrial socialism suffered from lack of trained personnel, inefficiency, rampant corruption, and poor leadership.^[69] Mujib focused almost entirely on national issues and thus neglected local issues and government. The party and central government exercised full control and democracy was weakened, with virtually no elections organized at the grass roots or local levels.^[95] Political opposition included communists as well as Islamic fundamentalists, who were angered by the declaration of a secular state. Mujib was criticized for nepotism in appointing family members to important positions.^{[96][68]} ^[3] Intense criticism of Mujib arose over the lack of political leadership, a flawed pricing policy, and rising inflation amidst heavy losses suffered by the nationalized industries. Mujib's ambitious social programs performed poorly, owing to scarcity of resources, funds, and personnel, and caused unrest amongst the masses.^[69]

The 1974 famine further intensified the food crisis, and devastated agriculture – the mainstay of the economy. The famine had personally shocked Mujib and profoundly affected his views on governance,^[22] while political unrest gave rise to increasing violence. During the famine, between 70,000 and 1.5 million people died (Note: Reports vary).^[97]

In response, he began increasing his powers. In 1974, Mujib declared a state of emergency. On 25 January 1975, the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution of Bangladesh was passed, replacing the parliamentary system with a presidential system, reducing the power of the National Parliament and Supreme Court, and codifying a One-party state into law.

On 24 February 1975, Mujib formed a new party, On 7 June 1975, Mujib's political supporters in his party and a few others amalgamated to form the only legal political party, the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League, commonly known by its initials—BaKSAL.^{[98][3]} All MPs were required to join BaKSAL.^{[99][100]} The party identified itself with the rural masses, farmers, and labourers and took control of all mechanisms of government. It also launched major socialist programs. Under this new system, Sheikh Mujib assumed the presidency and was given extraordinary powers. According to Time magazine:

Under the new system, executive powers are vested in the President, who will be elected directly every five years, and in a Council of Ministers appointed by him. Although an elected Parliament can pass legislation, the President has veto power and can dissolve Parliament indefinitely.^{[68][92][101]}

BaKSAL was protested by different groups but they were punished by Mujib. It was known that Sheikh Mujib never accepted any criticism against him. Mujib was widely accused of the 40,000 killings by the Jatiya Rakkhi Bahini militia.^[97] Using government forces and his existing militia of supporters called the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini, Mujib oversaw the arrest of opposition activists and strict control of political activities across the country.

Assassination

On 15 August 1975, a group of junior army officers invaded the presidential residence with tanks and killed Mujib, his family and personal staff.^{[3][102]} Only his daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, who were visiting West Germany at the time, escaped. They were banned from returning to Bangladesh. The coup was planned by disgruntled Awami League colleagues and military officers, which included Mujib's colleague and former confidanté Khondaker Mostaq Ahmad, who became his immediate successor. There was intense speculation in the media accusing the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency of having instigated the plot.^[103] Lawrence Lifschultz has alleged that the CIA was involved in the coup and assassination, basing his assumption on statements by the then-U.S. ambassador in Dhaka, Eugene Booster.^[104]

Mujib's death plunged the nation into a political turmoil. The coup leaders were soon overthrown and a series of counter-coups and political assassinations paralyzed the country.^[92] Order was largely restored after a coup in 1976 that gave control to the army chief Ziaur Rahman. Declaring himself President in 1978, Ziaur Rahman signed the Indemnity Ordinance, giving immunity from prosecution to the men who plotted^[105] Mujib's assassination and overthrow.

Sheikh Hasina had returned and herself became Prime Minister. She overturned the immunity decree and in 1998 a dozen army officers, including Abdul Majed, were sentenced to death. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh upheld the verdict and five of them were hanged. On 12 April 2020, the former army officer, Abdul Majed, was found in hiding and also executed for the assassination of Mujibur Rahman.^{[106][107]}

Personal life, family, and relatives

Mujibur was 13 years old when he married his paternal cousin Fazilatunnesa who was only three and had just lost her parents, so her (and Mujibur's) grandfather, Sheikh Abdul Hamid, had commanded his son Sheikh Lutfar Rahman to marry his son Mujibur to her.^[108] It was 9 years later, in 1942, when Mujibur was 22 years old and Begum Fazilatunnesa was 12 years old that the marriage was consummated.^[109] Together they had two daughters—Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana—and three sons—Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, and Sheikh Rasel.^[4] Kamal was an organizer of the Mukti Bahini guerrilla struggle in 1971 and received a wartime commission in the Bangladesh Army during the Liberation War. He was perceived to be the successor to Mujibur.^[110] Jamal was trained at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in Great Britain and later joined the Bangladesh Army as a Commissioned Officer.^{[111][112][113][114]} The Sheikh family was under house arrest during the Bangladesh Liberation War until 17 December,^[115] Sheikh Kamal and Jamal found the means to escape and cross over to a liberated zone, where they joined the struggle to free the country. Almost the entire Sheikh family was assassinated on 15 August 1975 during a military coup d'état. Only Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, who were visiting West Germany, escaped. Mujibur is the maternal grandfather of Tulip Siddiq, British-born Labour politician,^[116] and member of parliament for Hampstead and Kilburn since the 2015 UK general election.^[117] His nephews Sheikh Helal, Sheikh Selim, Sheikh Jewel, and Abul Hasanat Abdullah are members of parliament in Bangladesh. His grandnephews Sheikh Taposh, Nixon Chowdhury, Liton Chowdhury, Andaleev Rahman Partho, Sheikh Tonmoy, Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah, and Sheikh Parash are all Bangladeshi politicians. His grandniece, Dipu Moni, is the former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh.

Legacy

Bangladesh

Mujibur has been depicted on Bangladeshi currency, Taka and is the namesake of many Bangladesh public institutions.^[118]



Tomb of Mujibur in Gopalganj

During Mujibur's tenure as the premier leader, Muslim religious leaders and some politicians intensely criticized Mujibur's adoption of state secularism. He alienated some nationalist segments, and those in the military who feared Bangladesh would become too dependent on India. They worried about becoming a satellite state by taking extensive aid from the Indian government and allying



The Bangabandhu Square Monument

with that country on many foreign and regional affairs.^{[71][75]} Mujibur's imposition of one-party rule, suppression of political opposition with censorship and abuse of the judiciary, also alienated large segments of the population. Historians and political scientists think that it derailed Bangladesh's development as a democratic state, contributing to its subsequent political instability and violence. The economy also collapsed due to widespread corruption in the same period. Lawrence Lifschultz wrote in the magazine, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, in 1974 that Bangladeshis considered "the corruption and malpractices and plunder of national wealth" "unprecedented".^{[119][120]}

Zafrullah Chowdhury asserts that Mujibur himself was a major impediment to the fulfilment of those aspirations of the liberation, although he admits that he was a "great leader."^[121]

Following his assassination, succeeding governments offered low-key commemorations of Mujibur. Restoration of his public image awaited the election of an Awami League government in 1996, which was led by his eldest daughter, Sheikh Hasina, the leader of the party. 15 August has since been commemorated as "National Mourning Day". The country keeps its flags lowered to half-mast in this day as a sign of mourning.^{[122][123][124]} In 2016, the Awami League government passed a law that criminalized any criticism of Mujibur Rahman.^[125]

Despite controversy and disagreement among politicians, Mujibur remains a popular figure in Bangladesh. In a 2004 BBC Bengali opinion poll, Mujibur was voted as the "Greatest Bengali of All Time".^{[126][127][128]} The style of waistcoat that Mujibur wore during his political campaign is called a Mujib Coat (Bangla: মুজিব কোট) in Bangladesh.^[129]

Worldwide

- After one year of independence and Mujib rule, *Time* magazine wrote:

In sum, Bangladesh had little reason to enjoy a happy first birthday. If it is not the "basket case" that Henry Kissinger once called it, neither has it become the Shonar Bangla (Golden Bengal) envisioned by Mujib. How much this is the fault of Mujib is a moot question. It is true that he has had little time in which to combat some of Bangladesh's immense problems. Nevertheless, some critics contend that he has wasted some time playing the role of popular revolutionary figure (such as personally receiving virtually any of his people who call on him) when he should have been concentrating more on serious matters of state. If, as expected, he is elected in March, Mujib will face a clear test of whether he is not only the father of Bangladesh but also its savior.^[130]

- Cuban leader Fidel Castro compared Mujib's personality with the Himalayas during the Non-Aligned Summit in 1973.^[131]
- *Time* magazine wrote ten days after his death:

Mujib returned to the most tumultuous welcome Dacca had ever seen—and a staggering array of problems in probably the poorest (and most densely populated) country on earth. There were virtually no civil servants and little industry. Ports were clogged, railroads destroyed, the educated elite savaged. Worse, what had not been destroyed in war was soon destroyed by a devastating drought in 1973 and floods last year that inundated three-quarters of the country.

Laudable Objectives. Facing spreading violence—there had been at least 6,000 political murders since independence—Mujib declared a state of emergency last December. He subsequently banned extremist parties on both the left and the right, brought the press under government control, and cracked down on corruption.

The moves met with general favor in Bangladesh, but there were those who were critical. "Do not forget I have had only three years as a free government," he reminded critics. "You cannot expect miracles." Yet even he seemed impatient for miracles in the end. No one ever doubted that his objectives were laudable. Mujib wanted nothing less than to build a "shonar Bangla," the golden Bengal of the poem by Rabindranath Tagore that serves as the country's national anthem.^[132]

- In 2003, author David Ludden describe him as a "Forgotten Hero" in an article on *Frontline*.^[133]
- On 30 October 2017, UNESCO recognised Mujib's 7 March Speech as part of the world's documentary heritage.^[134]

Authored books

Sheikh Mujib wrote two volumes of his autobiography, where he expressed his view on politics and described his personal life. Both books were published after his death by his daughter and current Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.^{[135][136]}

- *The Unfinished Memoirs*. The University Press Limited, Penguin Books and Oxford University Press. ISBN 9789845061100.
- *Karagarer Rojnamcha*. Bangla Academy. 12 February 2010. ISBN 978-0-470-60264-5.

Portrayals

- Humayun Ahmed included Sheikh Mujib in two of his historical novels, 2004's *Jochona O Jononir Golpo* and 2012's *Deyal*.
- Neamat Imam's novel *The Black Coat* depicts Mujib as a deadliest dictator.^[137]
- In the 2014 Indian film *Children of War*, Prodip Ganguly portrayed of Sheikh Mujib.
- In 2015, the Centre for Research and Information (CRI) department of Bangladesh Awami League published a four-part children's comic book named *Mujib* based on Sheikh Mujib's two autobiographies.
- In the 2018 documentary film *Hasina: A Daughter's Tale*, Sheikh Mujib's daughter Sheikh Hasina spoke about the assassination of her father.