

Bangabandhu's March 7 speech was Bangalee's promise for independence: academics

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Online Desk: Bangabandhu's landmark March 7 speech was an oath of the Bangalee nation for the Liberation War as the entire nation took oath on that day and became united to face the Pakistani occupational forces after listening the speech, said academics. "Bangabandhu's speech was not only a historic speech rather it was an oath of Bangalee nation," noted academician and former Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Dhaka University (DU) Professor AAMS Arefin Siddique said while talking to BSS on the eve of the historic March 7.

"As Bangalees took oath on that day, they had jumped into the Liberation War immediately after the proclamation of independence by Bangabandhu in the early hours of March 26," he added. In his speech, Bangabandhu said: "I call upon you to turn every home into fortresses, confront the enemy with whatever you have and close all roads for life even if I am not around to give orders," Prof Arefin mentioned. He said though Bangabandhu was giving speech at the then Race Course Maidan, the seven and half crore people was listening it and they took oath on that day for the Liberation War.

Prof Arefin, also acting president of Bangabandhu Parishad, said March 7 speech was not only a speech rather it was an epic poem that is why the international Newsweek magazine termed Bangabandhu as a 'Poet of Politics' in the cover story of its April 5, 1971 issue. "Bangabandhu's speech was Bangalee's promise for achieving independence, proclamation of independence and Liberation War and seven and half crore Bangalee's oath," he said. "When Bangabandhu was sent to Pakistani jail in 1971 during the Liberation War, he led the nation through this March 7 speech," he said, adding that in absence of Bangabandhu, his speech was his presence to us. "When the speech was aired on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra and other radio stations including Akash Vani, it touched the heart of every people who listened," he said.

DU VC Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech managed to make the whole nation united and prepare them for the nation's most anticipated freedom as it contains all the instructions and guidelines for all the components, needed for a collective effort for a nation's fight for freedom. With a single speech, the great man managed to bring the whole nation under one umbrella and become a de facto sovereign, winning everyone's heart regardless of their caste, creed, sex and religions.

It was possible because each individual and community's concern and interest no matter what class and community they belong to, was known to Bangabandhu very well and thus, the great man managed to address the concern of each class and community equally along with giving directives for the nation's freedom, Akhtaruzzaman added. The significance of the speech didn't end up in achieving victory in the Liberation War rather the speech has been inspiring all the freedom-loving and democratic people around the world, the VC said, adding: "The relevance and significance of the speech will be similarly effective in the days to come."

DU Pro-VC (Administration) Prof Dr. Muhammad Samad said Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina started working on Bangabandhu's March 7 speech to present it to the new generation after returning home in 1981. Under her initiative, Bangabandhu Memorial Trust has been arranging seminar on the speech since 2004 which played an important role to spread it to the people and the new generation, he said. At the initiative of Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh Permanent Mission to UNESCO and Bangladesh Embassy in Paris published the book titled: "The Historic 7th March Speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman: A World Documentary Heritage" in UN's six official languages Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, Prof Samad mentioned.

He said Bangabandhu's March 7, 1971 speech has also been recognised as one of the world famous speeches in the book entitled: "We Shall Fight on the Beaches: The Speeches That Inspired History", by Jacob F Field, a noted historian. Prof Arefin, also chairman of the board of directors of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), said: "I believe, it's must to present the speech before the new generation again and again. This speech should be included in textbooks and this should be taught in classrooms." He said if that could be done, Bangabandhu's philosophy and personality could be disseminated before the youth generations after generations through this speech. The speech itself is a great textbook and there is the necessity to teach this textbook to youths, he continued.

The UNESCO has realised this thing and that is why it has included the speech in the Memory of the World International Register, Prof Arefin said, adding: "The significance of the speech now in 2023 is as important and relevant as it was in 1971 and even it will be the same on March 7 in 2050, when Bangalees will observe the day." "If we make psychological analysis of the speech, we find the extempore speech reflected words from his hearts in a very simple way," he said. So, it could be called a conversation not a speech as Bangabandhu made the address before the nation in a conversational style as if he was talking with the people.