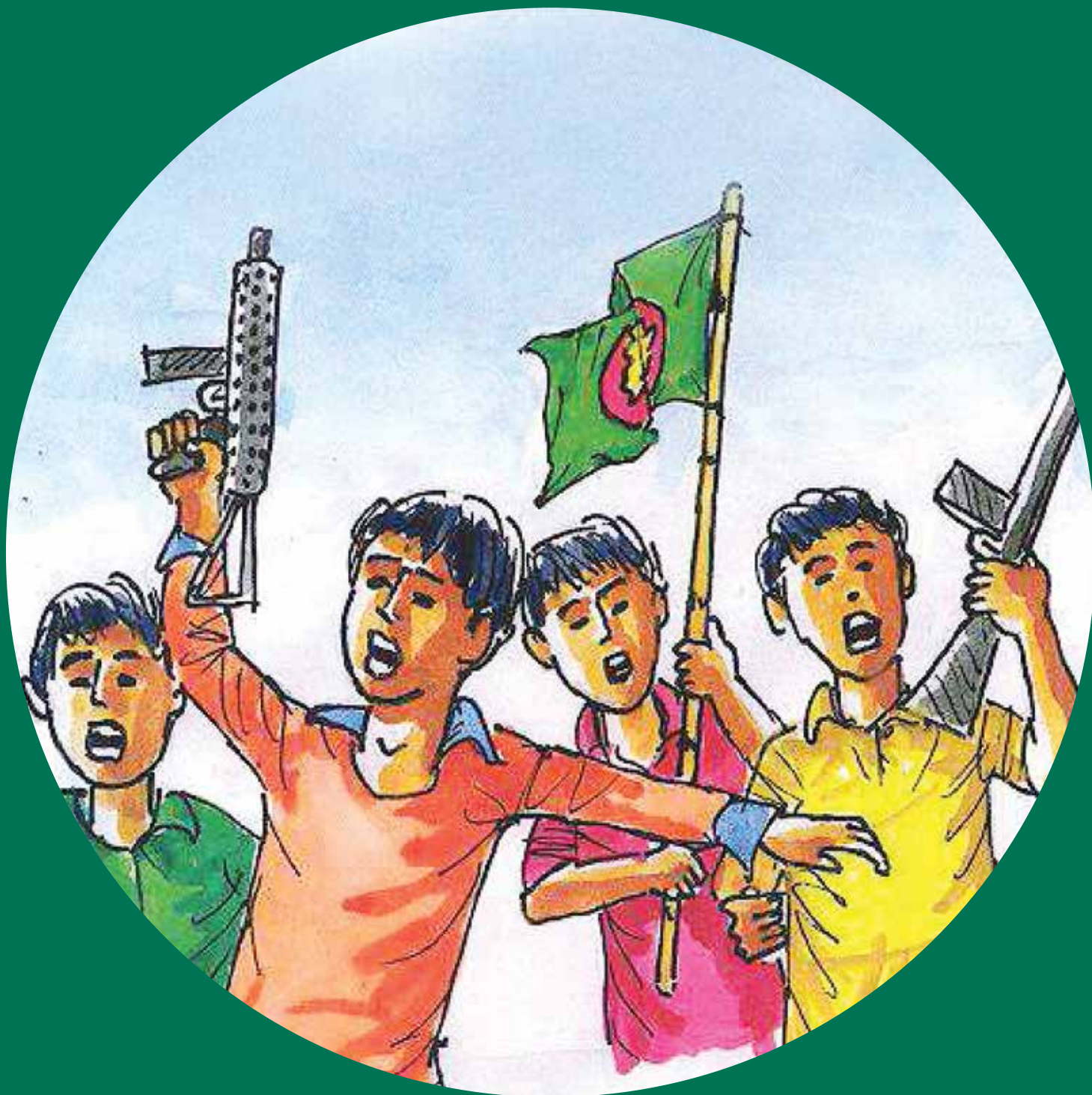


**Dhaka Tribune**

2014 Victory Day Special

**A Children's  
History of the Liberation War**

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Once upon a time, our beloved Bangladesh was known as East Pakistan. At that time, Pakistan was a truly strange country because it had two parts - one was called East Pakistan while the other was West Pakistan. The distance between East and West Pakistan was almost 2,000km, and in between was another country - India.

Bangalis lived in East Pakistan. Our language, dress, food and culture were nothing like those of West Pakistan.

The population of West Pakistan was smaller than the Bangalis of East Pakistan. And yet, they ruled over the Bangalis and exploited them in different ways. The revenue earned in East Pakistan was mostly spent in West Pakistan. There were very few Bangalis in the Pakistan military.

And that's not all. They tried to force the Urdu language onto the Bangalis. The Bangalis refused to accept this, and so they rebelled. Bangla was then made the state language. But this came at the cost of the lives of Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar and many others



**From the very beginning, West Pakistan exploited Bangalis in different ways. In 1952, the people of this country gave their lives to make Bangla the state language.**

like them. This day in 1952 is commemorated all over the world on February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

One great leader, and a favourite of the Bangalis in East Pakistan, could not tolerate the torture and

abuse perpetrated by the West Pakistanis. So to free his people, he decided to take a stand against them. This man was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Bangabandhu made a six-point demand, which, if accepted, would

end all the torture and abuse on East Pakistan. He and several members of his party were imprisoned and tortured for this six-point revolt, or "chhoy dofa andolon," but he refused to stand down. Finally in 1969, after a great rebellion, he was set free.

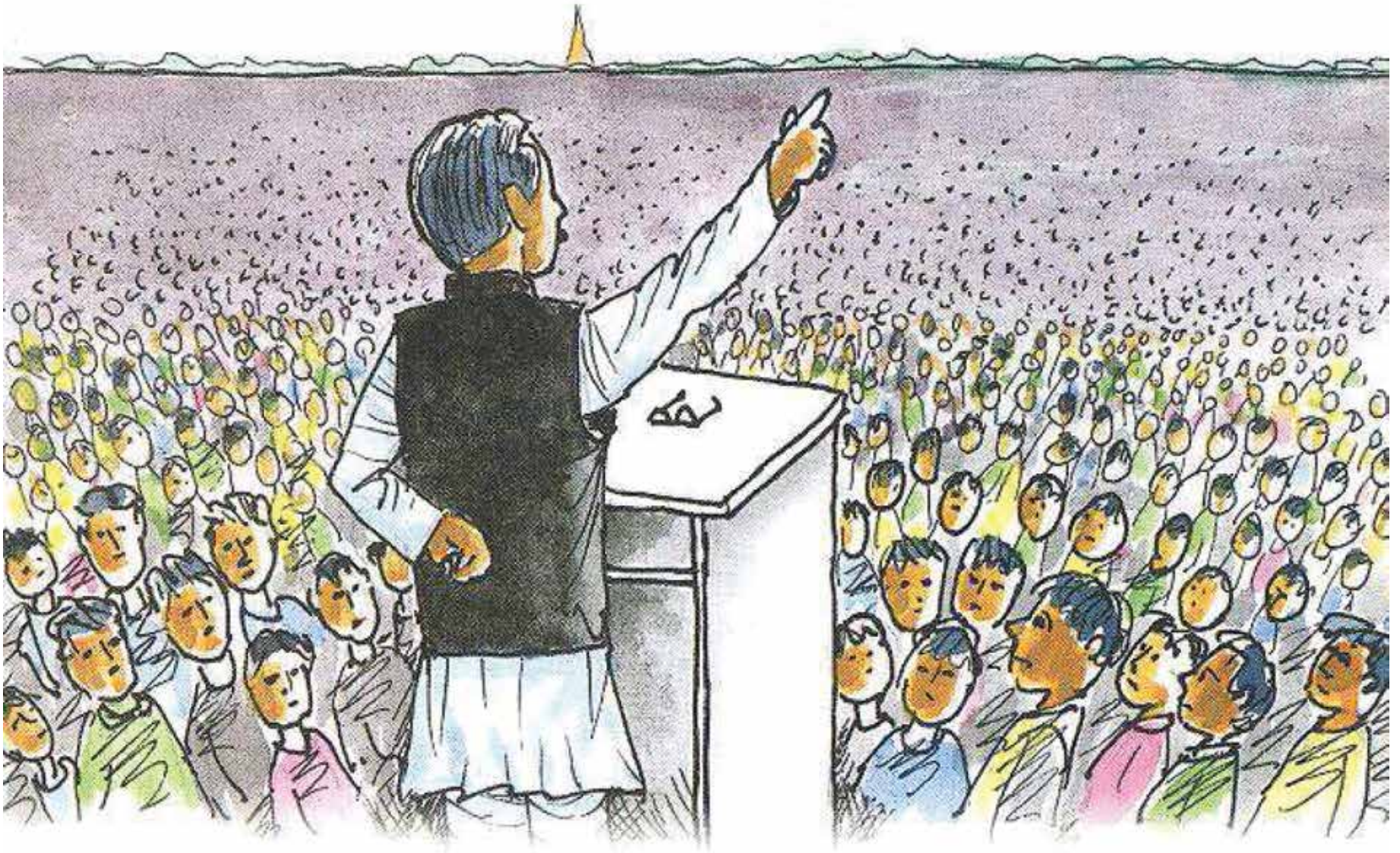
The people put their faith in Bangabandhu then and supported him. As a result, during the 1970 elections in Pakistan, Mujib's party, the Awami League, won all but two of the seats in parliament. This meant Bangabandhu would now be the state leader of not only East Pakistan, but of the whole of Pakistan.

The leader of the Pakistan military, General Yahya Khan, and his supporters could not accept this at all. They could not imagine the Bangalis ruling over Pakistan. So they began to conspire with Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the political leader of West Pakistan. As part of their conspiracy, the National Assembly session scheduled for March 1971 was suddenly halted.

When the news reached East Pakistan, people poured onto the streets in angry protest. Demonstration after demonstration took place all over the country, the slogan "Joy Bangla" on everyone's lips.



**To free itself from Pakistan's exploitation, East Pakistan began a six-point revolt in 1967, leading to the downfall of the military government.**



**On March 7, 1971, Bangabandhu gave a speech at the Race Course Maidan. In that speech, he announced: "Our fight today is for our freedom. Our fight today is for our independence!"**



**The Pakistani government refused to hand over power to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman when his party won the elections. And so began the fight for an independent Bangladesh. A new national flag was created with the map of Bangladesh on it, and "Amar Shonar Bangla" became the new national anthem.**

**B**angabandhu then began his non-cooperation movement. He declared that Bangalis would not cooperate with West Pakistan until the latter accepted their demands. The whole of East Pakistan ground to a standstill at this one declaration.

The students and general public of East Pakistan had understood by this time that it was not possible to remain with West Pakistan any longer. So they began an uprising for an independent Bangladesh. They created a new national flag bearing the map of Bangladesh, and declared "Amar Shonar Bangla" as the national anthem. The flag of an independent Bangladesh began to fly from the roofs of houses all over the country.

On March 7, 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman gave a speech at the

Racecourse Maidan in Dhaka. There he declared: "Our fight today is for freedom! Our fight today is for independence!" This speech inspired the thousands of spectators, making them ready to lay down their lives for their country's freedom.

The West Pakistan military were certainly not sitting idle. On the pretext of talking to Mujib, they began to smuggle arms, canons, gunpowder, bullets, and thousands of military personnel into East Pakistan. Then, calmly and in a premeditated move, they attacked the people of East Pakistan in the middle of the night on March 25.

That night, the Pakistani military murdered thousands of people in Dhaka city. They destroyed buildings and set fire to homes. Machine guns shot down those who tried to



**On March 25, in the middle of the night, the Pakistani military attacked the Bangalis - and so began the most horrific mass killing in history. Before he was arrested, Bangabandhu declared independence and on March 26, Bangladesh was born.**

escape. The Pakistan military was most enraged by university students and teachers, so they sought them out and killed them.

Without any form of preparation, the Rajarbagh Police in Dhaka and the East Pakistan Rifles paramilitary force (now Border Guard Bangladesh) in Pilkhana fought back with all their might. But the Pakistan military, with their heavy artillery and tanks, far outnumbered them, and they were forced to back down.

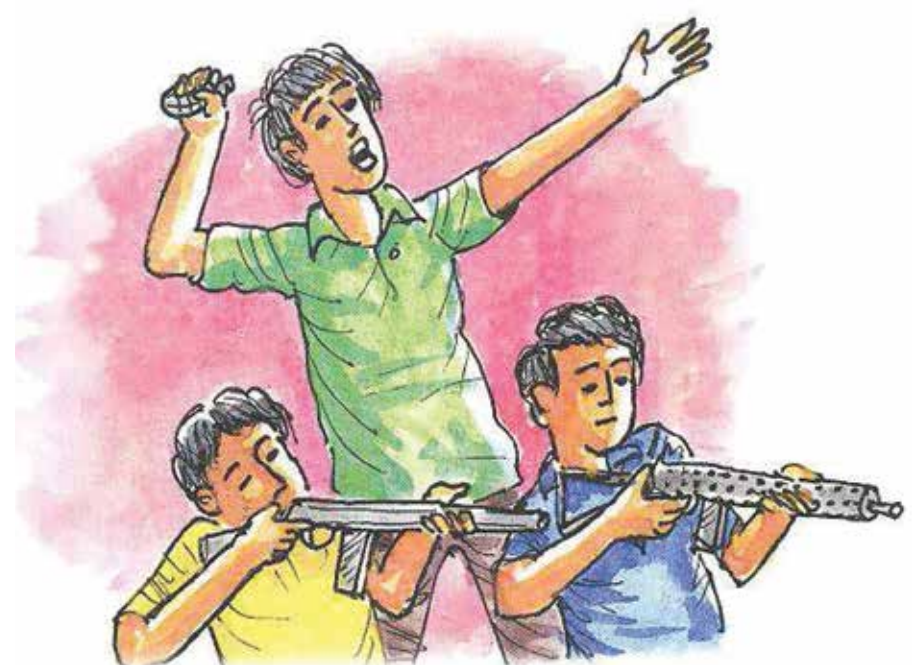
Pakistan military commandos attacked Bangabandhu in his home on March 25 and arrested him. But Bangabandhu had already declared independence by then. This declaration was broadcast after midnight, and so our Independence Day is March 26.

The Pakistan military seized the weapons of the Bangali military and either locked up the soldiers or

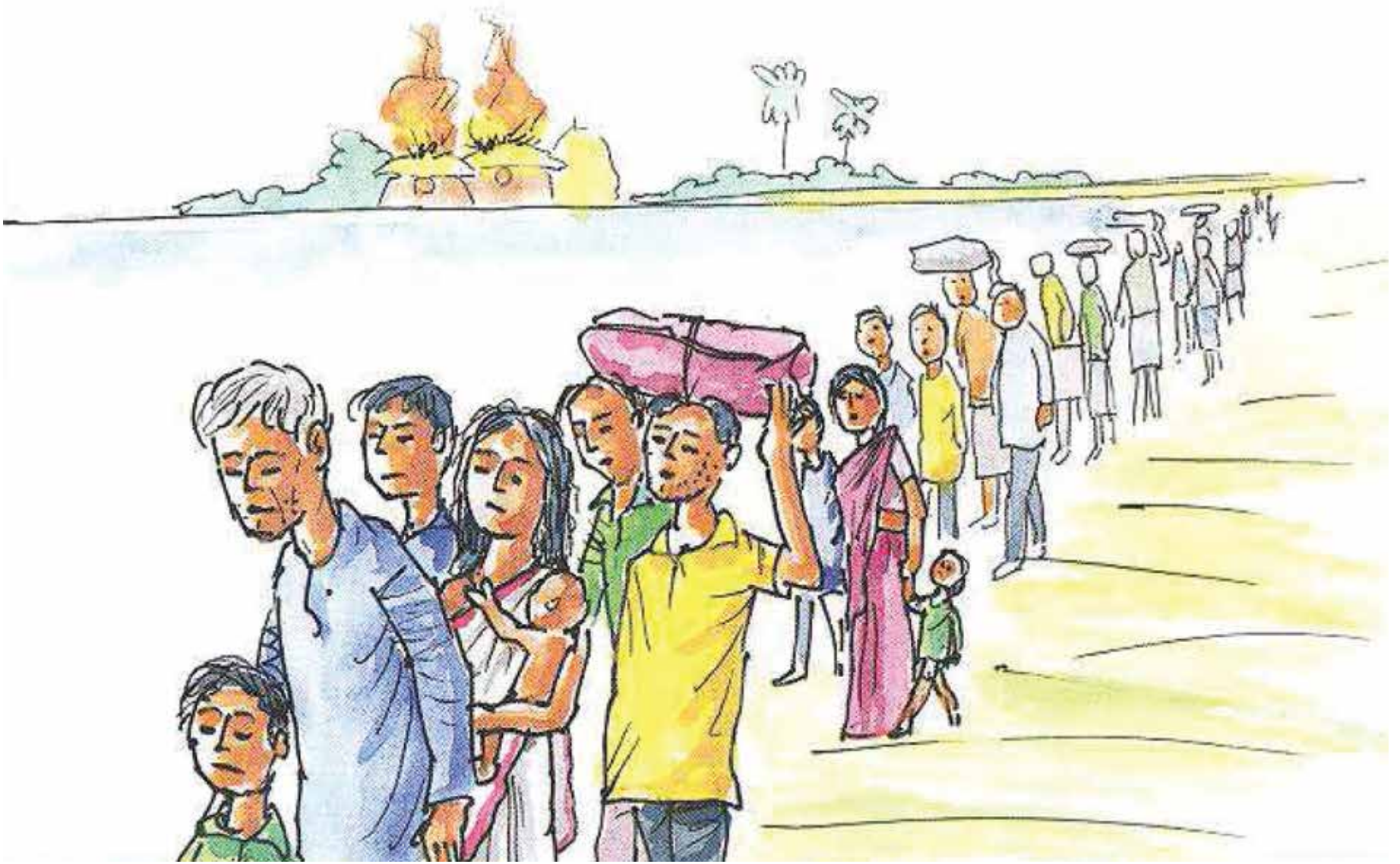
killed them. Innumerable Bangali soldiers died, but those who could fought like heroes and escaped from the Pakistan military camp.

**O**n March 27, Major Ziaur Rahman read out the declaration of independence once more on behalf of Bangabandhu from the Kalurghat Radio Station in Chittagong. The general public, including students, farmers and labourers, all joined the Bangali armed forces to fight against the Pakistan military. The Bangalis, however, were not prepared for an armed war at the time because they had no arms or experience. By mid-May, the Pakistan military had more or less taken over Bangladesh. Then began a spate of horrific mass killings, torture, and persecution.

A few traitors from this country, of whom most were members of



**The whole country revolted, and the war was on. Thousands of students and civilians, farmers and labourers joined in this fight for freedom.**



**Of the 70 million people in the country, 10 million took refuge in the neighboring country India to save their lives.**



**The Pakistani military was supported by traitorous groups known as Rajakar, Al-Badr and Al-Shams.**



**Women and men, children and young adults, and Adivasi people - all joined the fight for freedom.**

the Jamaat-e-Islami party, joined hands with the Pakistan military. They put together the Rajakar, Al-Badr, and Al-Shams groups and, alongside the Pakistan military, began to wreak untold violence on the people of this country.

**T**o save their lives, almost 10 million people escaped into the neighbouring country, India, to seek refuge.

Although India provided shelter, it was not prepared for the arrival of so many people. So there was not enough food or medical help available. Unable to stand the unspeakable conditions, thousands died there, most of whom were children.

Since the Pakistan military had arrested and taken Bangabandhu away, Tajuddin Ahmed stepped up to guide the country. Gathering all the leaders of Bangladesh, he formed the government of Bangladesh on April 10.

Under their leadership now began the fight for liberation. Colonel MAG Osmani became the commander-in-chief of the Bangladesh Armed Forces. As the regular armed

forces fought face to face with the Pakistani army however, the guerrillas in the Mukti Bahini (freedom fighters) began stealth attacks.

The country was divided into eleven sectors, and the fight for freedom began with renewed vigor. Students and civilians, farmers and labourers, women and men, children and Adivasi people all joined this fight. Those who were not directly involved with the fighting helped by giving the freedom fighters shelter and food.

The artists at Shadhin Bangla Radio sang patriotic songs and broadcast news of the war to inspire and encourage the people. Those who lived abroad collected funds and garnered public support for the freedom fighters. World-famous singers held concerts while poets wrote poetry, and in this way, people from all over the world came forward to support the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

In the beginning, the guerrillas lacked experience, but they learned quickly and soon grew very daring. They put their lives on the line in this fight. Most of these guerrillas

were young men - but how courageous they were, and how deep was their love for their country!

The Pakistani army was perturbed by their attacks. To get back at the guerillas, the army began burning down neighbouring villages and killing civilians.

But the guerilla attacks did not stop. They continued.

Gradually, the Pakistani army became too scared to even venture out of their camps. They stayed in their bunkers and tried to somehow save themselves. It slowly began to dawn on them that they would lose this war. And because India had provided arms and training to the freedom fighters, and given shelter to 10 million refugees, they were upset with India as well. On December 3, Yahya Khan suddenly attacked India. Then India declared war on Pakistan. The Indian army now joined the freedom fighters of Bangladesh to create an allied force called the Mitro Bahini.

The Pakistani army had become so weak from the guerilla attacks that when the Indian Mitro Bahini joined the Mukti Bahini, they could barely last another two weeks. In just another 13 days of fighting, the Mukti Bahini and the Mitro Bahini defeated the Pakistanis and surrounded Dhaka city. When the Pakistani army realised there was no way out, the hundred thousand-strong army surrendered.

That day was December 16, and this day became our Victory Day.

However, a group of traitors were lying in wait inside our country. They realised the Pakistani army would lose and an independent Bangladesh would be born. But to prevent Bangladesh from ever standing tall, the traitorous members of Al-Badr Bahini murdered hundreds of teachers, doctors, engineers, poets, litterateurs, journalists and scientists. There is no mercy for such a crime. The people of Bangladesh have nev-



**The Indian Army joined the Mukti Bahini to respond to Pakistan's attacks. Within 13 days of battle with the allied forces, the Pakistani army surrendered.**



**Knowing that defeat was certain, the Al-Badr Bahini dragged hundreds of teachers, doctors, engineers, poets, litterateurs and journalists from their homes and killed them.**



**The independence that was declared on March 26 was realised on December 16. The flag of Bangladesh waved proudly in the skies of an independent nation.**

er forgiven these men, and they will never do so.

Not one, not two, but at the cost of three million lives, we gained our independence in 1971. A number of years have passed since then. We have achieved much, but there is so much we have not. We are continuously working to attain what we have not yet. We dream that, some day, students and civilians, farmers and laborers, women and men, and the Adivasi people will all come together to develop our beloved nation.

We will remain forever grateful to the freedom fighters who

brought us independence, and will love them forever as well. We have shown our respect by awarding the title of Bir Sreshto to seven of them and given medals to several others, but there are innumerable other freedom fighters for whom we have done nothing.

We must seek these freedom fighters out, clasp their hands and say: "We love you forever for giving us an independent Bangladesh."

We must look into their eyes and promise: "We will build the nation you dreamt about. We will repay you for the blood you have sacrificed." ●



**Freedom fighters are the heroes of our nation. We must promise to build up our Bangladesh and repay them for their sacrifice.**

# A Children's History of the Liberation War

