

Bangladesh Freedom Honour on her Excellency Srimati Indira Gandhi

Speech By

Sheikh Hasina

Prime Minister

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangabhaban, Monday, 10 Shraban 1418, 25 July 2011

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

Hon'ble President,
Her Excellency Ms Sonia Gandhi,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Assalamu Alaikum and Very Good afternoon to you all.

It is my great privilege to be present at the conferring of the 'Bangladesh Freedom Honour (posthumously)' on her Excellency Srimati Indira Gandhi, former Prime Minister of the Republic of India.

I recall with deep gratitude the immense contribution of the people of India, especially the then Prime Minister of India, Srimati Indira Gandhi in the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

The Indian government had not only given shelter to nearly 10 million refugees driven out by the atrocities of the Pakistani occupation forces from Bangladesh, but also provided political, military, logistic, diplomatic and mental support to the government of Bangladesh based in Kolkata, West Bengal.

I pay my deep homage to the members of the Indian soldiers of Bangladesh-India Friendship Forces, who were martyred in the Liberation War of Bangladesh. I also pay my deep respect to the 3 million heroic Bangalees who sacrificed their lives, and 200 thousand women who lost their innocence in the War of Liberation.

In 1971, Mrs Gandhi traveled the world seeking support of the world community for the cause of the independence of Bangladesh as well as saving the life of the Greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who had been facing capital punishment in the Pakistani jail at that time.

Mrs Gandhi was a true and great friend of Bangladesh, its people and Bangabandhu. At the call of Bangabandhu, she withdrew the Indian soldiers within three months of the independence of Bangladesh. That was a unique and rare gesture of Mrs Indira Gandhi.

Besides, the contribution and support of India in the reconstruction of the war-ravaged Bangladesh were invaluable.

I personally grateful to the Indian government and Mrs Indira Gandhi for providing shelter to my sister Sheikh Rehana and my family after the brutal assassination of my father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 along with our most of the family members. That was really an invaluable support of Mrs Gandhi like a guardian extended to us during our time of distress.

I myself as well as on behalf of my countrymen pay profound tribute to the memory of the great leader of India, Mrs Indira Gandhi. We are delighted to honor her with our highest laurel.

I express my gratitude to Her Excellency Mrs Sonia Gandhi, President of Indian National Congress, for receiving the award on behalf of the family.

I hope that the relations between Bangladesh and India would continue to grow in the days to come.

I wish prosperity and happiness of the fraternal people of India and good health, long life and happiness of her Excellency Mrs Sonia Gandhi and her family members.

Thank you all.

Khoda Hafez.

Joi, Bangla, Joi Bangabadhu.

May Bangladesh Live Forever.

.....