

Class 9 English assignment 2nd week

A Fact File on Bangabandhu

The founding father of Bangladesh, Banga Bandhu (Friend of Banga) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was born on March 17, 1920, in Tungipara village in the Faridpur district in erstwhile East Pakistan. He was the third child of Sheikh Luthfur Rahman and Sheikh Sahara Khatun. After the partition of India in 1947, Mujibur built his career in East Pakistan as an active politician championing the cause of Bengalis. Although religion was the common factor in East and West Pakistan, there were economic, social, and linguistic differences. East Pakistan (East Bengal until 1956) was less developed than the west, and the discriminatory policies of West Pakistan increased the marginalization of the eastern part of the country. Mujibur was emerging as a prominent leader in the wake of the imposition of Urdu as the official language. His Muslim Students League formed an All-Party State League Action Council in March 1948. Mujibur, also called Mujib, became the joint secretary of the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (called the Awami League from 1954) when it was formed in June 1949. In 1952 the police brutally crushed the movement to make Bengali one of the official languages of Pakistan. Cracks had already opened in united Pakistan, and it was Mujib who spearheaded the cause of separation from the west.

Mujib contested as a candidate of the United Front, which had been formed by the Awami League for the 1954 general elections. The following year the Awami League demanded autonomy for the eastern wing of Pakistan. Under the presidency of General Mohammad Ayub Khan the Bengalis were further alienated. Mujib and the people of East Pakistan witnessed a harsh military regime exploiting and dominating the eastern wing. The Ayub government was dismayed at Mujib's popularity and imprisoned him many times.

Mujib spelled out a six-point program in February 1966 demanding autonomy for all provinces of Pakistan. He was accused of engineering the secession of East Pakistan, and proceedings were initiated against him in the Agartala Conspiracy Case of 1968. In the 1970 elections to the National Assembly of Pakistan, Mujib's Awami League secured an absolute majority, winning 162 seats out of 313. The new president of Pakistan, Muhammad Yahya Khan, was in no mood to give power to Mujib. The convening of the National Assembly was postponed. On March 25 Mujib declared the independence of East Pakistan, which was renamed Bangladesh. He was taken to West Pakistan in March 1971 to be tried for treason.

With Indian military assistance Bangladesh was liberated on December 16, 1971. Meanwhile, the government of Pakistan had sentenced Mujib to death. But because of

international pressure, he was finally released and became the first prime minister of Bangladesh on January 12, 1972.

Mujib faced the difficult task of governing the nation, which faced the challenges of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Disagreements with Pakistan remained. Mujib signed a 25-year friendship treaty with India. Most countries recognized Bangladesh, which also became a member of the United Nations. Mujib followed a nonaligned foreign policy. He promulgated a constitution in 1971 containing the principles of secularism, socialism, and democracy. Mujib also launched welfare programs.

The Awami Party won the elections of 1973 with a massive majority. But poor governance, corruption, opposition from disgruntled elements, and natural disasters created problems. Mujib declared a state of emergency in 1975. A presidential form of government was initiated with Mujib as president for life. In June the Awami League became the only legal party. On August 15, 1975, Mujib and 15 of his family members were assassinated by young army officers. The military government that followed passed the infamous Indemnity Ordinance giving indemnity to the assassins. It was not until 1998 that the culprits were sentenced to death, when the Awami League government of Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Mujib, came to power.

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