

Indian army saved Sheikh Hasina and family in 1971 war: Mujib's aide

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Dhaka: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her family members faced the risk of being massacred but were saved by a group of Indian soldiers during the 1971 liberation war, her father's close aide said today, as Bangladesh marked the 44th anniversary of its triumph over Pakistan.

Recalling the events after the victory of Bangladesh in liberation war, Hazi Golam Morshed - one of the top aides of Bangladesh's founder and Hasina's father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman - said he escorted the four-man squad of Indian soldiers to the house where Bangabandhu's wife Begum Fazilatunnesa was imprisoned along with Hasina and three other children.

The Indian squad was led by Major Ashok Tara, whom Bangladesh honoured conferring him with the 'Friend of Bangladesh' award two years ago.

'The Pakistani soldiers guarding the house looked frightened but arrogant...visibly they were unaware of the surrender (of Pakistan) even on that morning of December 17,' said Morshed, who is now 85.

'Major Tara approached the (Pakistani) soldiers unarmed... One of the guards shouted, asking him not to proceed a single step further if he wanted to avoid being shot,' he recalled. Morshed described the subsequent few minutes to be highly 'delicate' as it appeared that the 'frustrated, frightened and directionless' Pakistani guards were going to kill the Bangabandhu family.

Morshed happened to be the last man to accompany Bangabandhu until the Pakistani troops on March 25, 1971 night and arrested him. On his release, he found out that Bangabandhu's family was detained at a house heavily guarded by the Pakistani troops.

On December 17, he went to makeshift camp at the Circuit House in Kakrail to inform the Indian forces about it. An Indian major general introduced him to Major Tara and then entrusted him with the task of rescuing the Bangabandhu family.

When Major Tara reached the house he told the Pakistani troops that their army had surrendered as they were not aware about the development due to disruption of communication. 'And as soon as I entered the house, (Bangabandhu) Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's wife hugged me and said "I was her son sent by God from the heaven (to save the family),"' Tara said in an earlier interview.

Meanwhile, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Hasina today paid homage to the war heroes at the National Memorial, followed by a guard of honour by a contingent of the three armed forces.

The memorial was then opened to the public.

- PTI