



Genocide Day

What is the issue?

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Bangladesh has announced March 25 as Genocide Day.

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Why Genocide Day?

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- It has been a long-pending demand in Bangladesh, by political parties and civil society, to mark the atrocities committed by the Pakistani army on civilians in the then East Pakistan during the Liberation War in 1971.

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- The Bangladesh Parliament passed a resolution calling on the government to observe March 25 as Genocide Day.

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- The government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the demand and said it would send two senior officials to the UN headquarters in New York and the UN Human Rights Council office in Geneva for international recognition of the day.

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What happened on March 25, 1971?

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- On the night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistani army, launched **Operation Searchlight** in Dhaka aimed at curbing elements of the separatist Bengali nationalist movement.

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- The Pakistani army, along with local activists from the **Jamaat-e-Islami**, unleashed violence that night, targeting students and teachers of Dhaka University and neighbourhoods of Old Dhaka.

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- According to some researchers, around 7,000 people were killed and 3,000 were arrested. During the early hours of March 26, Mujibur Rahman declared the independence of Bangladesh, which officially set off the Liberation War.

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How did Pakistan respond to those events?

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- Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto set up a judicial commission to find out the atrocities committed by the army in East Pakistan.

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- Justice Hamoodur Rahman submitted his report in 1974, which was not released to the public for three decades.

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- It documented large-scale atrocities committed by the Pakistani troops and also recommended that the government establish a special court to further investigate the army's actions.

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- The Pakistani authorities haven't offered a formal apology so far.

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Will this affect Bangladesh's relations with Pakistan?

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- Bilateral ties have been strained after Bangladesh started prosecuting alleged war criminals who collaborated with the Pakistani army in 1971.

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- With Pakistan still refusing to apologise, Bangladesh's move to get international recognition for the genocide will have repercussions for bilateral relations.

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Source: The Hindu

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