



# Bangladesh Association, Houston

## বাংলাদেশ এসোসিয়েশন, হিউস্টন

Evolution of a community: 1971 onward

1971

## The beginning

1971

In 1971 there were only 2 students at the University of Houston (UH) from former East Pakistan. With the help of local people, this small Bangali community collected \$5,000 in cash and 500lb of emergency medication, and ship load of old clothes to provide relief for the suffering people in their home country after the worst cyclone in living memory struck Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) on November 12, 1970. Medications were air lifted, the fumigated clothes were shipped by the sea, and the money was donated to an international agency.

In April of 1971, Bangladesh Student Association was formed at UH, despite the strong opposition from Pakistani students. S. S. Newaz was ousted as the President of Pakistan Student Association and became the first president of Bangladesh Student Association. During 1971, there were the following individuals of Bangladeshi origin lived in Houston as students or professionals. They were: Mr. Dewan Aftab Ahmed, Dr. S. S. Newaz, Mr. Habibul Kabir, Mr. Mahbubur Rahman, Mr. Kamalendu Das, Dr. A. Satter, and a young faculty Member Dr. Fazle Hussain (Fall 1971). It is important to note that 21st February was observed at the UH international students' fair, despite a rowdy objections from the majority of the Pakistan Student Association.

The UH student community interacted closely with the larger student body at Texas A&M for the independence movement. The students at UH and A&M collected funds from their meager stipends and supplemented their income with a lot of menial jobs to clandestinely send money to Mukti Jodhha relatives in Bangladesh and India. Their activities to get the public support in the USA was mainly focused through writing in newspapers, radio and TV talk shows, meeting with union groups and communication with US congressmen and senators. Pakistan Embassy categorically declared the leaders of this small group as renegade and undesirable, their passports were cancelled, and they became "stateless persons".

Some other prominent personalities that took an active role in interactions and communications were : Dr. F.R. Khan, the architect from Chicago; Nobel Laureate Mohammed Yunus, then a graduate student at Vanderbilt; Dr.

1971

Zahurul Haq (his grave is in Houston); English faculty at Alcorn A&M (Mississippi), Voice of Bangla Radio News from Radio Pakistan, Karachi. And let's not forget the support of the Indian community in general and West Bengal community in particular, for their continued financial and logistic support during the time of need.

In the summer of 1971, Pakistan Student Association invited one Member of Parliament from East Pakistan (after the earlier election was declared void by Yahya Khan) to show everything was normal in East Pakistan. Bangladesh Student Association protested during the meeting, participated in question and answer sessions, where the pathetic lies were exposed to the local media so clearly.

1973

Handmade bumper stickers were made at the garage of Ed Lewis with slogans like "Joi Bangla", "Stop genocide in Bangladesh", "Yahia Khan, the modern Genghis Khan".

1973-1978

In 1973 The first Ambassador of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh to USA, honorable Hossain Ali, graced us by his visit to Houston and categorically mentioned about the contribution of Bangladeshis living abroad and that of Houston in particular in the independence movement. Mr. Hossain Ali, the first Pakistani diplomat to defect, recognized the support and contribution from the local community. The Student Association was also proud to recognize them through the ambassador. Some of the individuals mentioned were: Mr. Ed Lewis, an engineer with life-long love affair with Bangladesh; Dr. Burke, the International Students' director for supporting the "stateless" students; Dr. James R. Cox, who bought the air ticket for Kamalendu Das to escape the refugee camp in Assam, Dr. Walker and Dr. Tucker, for their continuous support during 1971.

1973-74

Graduates from Texas A&M began to migrate to Houston as professionals, and there started the first wave of students coming to Houston! Some of them along with already in Houston are: Dr. Khandaker Rahman (now in Houston), Dr. Hafiz Ahmed (now in Atlanta), Dr. Sayeed Hassan (now in Houston), Dr. Quamruzzaman (now in Ohio), Dr. Zakiuddin Husain (now in Houston), Dr. Selina Ahmed (now

in Houston), Dr. Zakir Hasan (Now in Florida), Dr. Sabbir Hossain (Now in Houston), Mrs. Rehana Hussain, Mrs. Saeeda Newaz, Mr. Mozammel Hossain, Mr. Ashraf Islam (now in Houston), Mr. Mafuzul Haque (now in Bangladesh), to name a few.

During this period several people served as chairman of the Bangladesh Student Association of UH. They were: Mr. Mustafa Jamal, Dr. Sabbir Hossain, Mr. Hasan Rahman, Mr. Nurul Ahkter, Mr. K. M. Rahman (all in Houston), Mr. Kamalendu Das, and others.

All the representative functions of Bangladesh were done by the Student Association

*1978- to date*

1978 to date

In 1978 few Bangladeshis from Bangladesh Student Association established Bangladesh Association, Houston (BAH). Since the inception, Bangladesh Association has become pioneer in organizing major fundraising events to help disaster victims in Bangladesh, USA, and around the world. BAH achieved many significant milestones during this period including purchase of a 4 acre land in 2001.

During this period several people served as chairman of Bangladesh Association and the Director of Bangladesh-American Center. Chairman of BAH were Mr. Dewan Aftab Ahmed, Dr. Khandaker Rahman, Dr. S. S. Newaz, Dr. Aziz Ahmad, Mr. Humayan Morshed, Mr. Nazmul Husain, Mr. Shahadat Khan, Dr. Zakiuddin Husain, Dr. Selina Ahmed, Mr. Golam Mohammad, Mr. Hasan Rahman, Prof Selina K. rahman, and Mr. Afzal Ahmed. Bangladesh-American Center Directors were Mr. Azadul Haq, Late Mr. Quamrul Islam, Mr. Mohammed Fakrul Ahsan, and Mr. Hasan Rahman.

- 1978 Established Bangladesh Association, Houston
- 1984 Bangladesh head of state visited Houston and inaugurated a trade show with trade delegates lead Hossain Md. Ershad. City of Houston provided a stately protocol
- 1989 Received 501 c (3) statuses from IRS
- 1989 Held Seminar on Flood Prevention in Bangladesh
- 1990 BAH started a very successful weekend Bangla school
- 1990 Co-hosted 1990 FOBANA Convention in Dallas
- 1991 Organized fund-raising for Bangladesh flood victims and raised \$120,000.00
- 1996 Bangladesh-American Center formation dialogue initiated
- 1998 Launched Bangladesh Association website: [www.bangladesh-association.com](http://www.bangladesh-association.com)
- 1998 Bangladesh-American Center formation dialogue formally launched
- 1998 Organized fund-raising for Bangladesh flood victims and raised \$50,000.00
- 1999 Established emergency fund “Zee Memorial Fund” for helping needy families
- 1999 Celebrated of 100th Birthday of Kazi Nazrul Islam
- 2000 Amended the BAH constitution
- 2000 Celebrated the first International Mother Language Day (IMLD) in Houston and continued the event every year. Since then representative from over 20 countries joined in the celebration. Houston Mayor proclaimed the Day as International Mother Language Day (IMLD)

- 2001 Held prayer vigil, raised fund for victims of 9/11 tragedy. Worked with federal, state and local officials to raise awareness for peace and harmony
- 2001 Bought 3.99 acres land for \$137,000 to build Bangladesh-American Center
- 2002 His Excellency Syed Hasan Ahmad, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to USA visited Houston
- 2002 The Coalition for Peace in South Asia - a Rally in front of the Houston City Hall to stop the imminent war between India & Pakistan
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- 2003 Sent proposal to Bangladesh Embassy to offer Mobile Consulate Services in North America. Bangladesh Embassy started this service in 2004
- 2003 Bangladesh Association By-Laws reviewed and approved
- 2003 Raised \$5,000 under "Zee Memorial Fund" and helped Musa family. Also worked with the parties involved to have Late Musa's house completely paid off and helped secure the families future housing needs
- 2003 Bangladesh-American Center established 1150 sq ft office with nice patio to accommodate BAH activities while the center project is underway. This facility is used regularly for BAH meetings, rehearsals, tournaments, etc. and also rented to other Bangladeshis for various events
- 2003 Bangladesh Association joined the Houston Mayor's International Affairs and Development Council

(MIADC) and continued the membership since then

- 2004 Organized fund-raising for Bangladesh flood victims and raised \$35,000
- 2004 Raised \$2,050 under “Zee Memorial Fund” and helped Mustafizur Rahman and Lamiya fund
- 2004 Sent a proposal to the Government of Bangladesh to recognize foreign citizens who had contributed as Freedom Fighters for our Liberation War.
- 2005 Started a campaign “Bring the honorable remains of Late Bir Shrestho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman”
- 2005 Successfully hosted North America Bangla Literature and Cultural Convention. Texas Governor Rick Perry, and Houston Mayor Bill White proclaimed the Convention
- 2005 Organized fund-raising for Victims of Hurricane Katrina and raised \$4,500, donated computers, procured medical attention and supply, housing to house the displaced, providing rides and other services as needed.
- 2005 Worked with Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee to raise funds and other necessities for the Tsunami victims.
- 2006 Since 2006, Bangladesh Association is serving as a liaison between our community and the U.S. Justice Department, and various local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, like FBI, HPD, Airport Security, etc. and discusses issues and concerns to find solutions that relates to our community. These interactions provide us a forum to discuss community concerns and work towards greater understanding.
- 2006 Raised \$1,400 under “Zee Memorial Fund” and helped the Russell Family
- 2007 Organized Arsenic problem awareness and fund-raising. Developed web site and raised \$3,500

- 2007      Organized fund-raising for Bangladesh flood victims and raised \$100,000
- 2007      Raised \$18,000 under “Zee Memorial Fund” and helped three families in crisis
- 2008      Organized fund-raising for Bangladesh flood victims and raised \$41,000
- 2008      Nobel laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus visited Houston and met community members
- 2008      BAH/ BAC was listed as North American Bangladeshi organization under dissemination list about Diabetes. National Diabetes Education Program and CDC together produced and translated the booklet “4 Steps to Control Your Diabetes for Life” in Bangla. BAH distributed the booklet in 2009 during FOBANA convention
- 2009      BAH built a partnership with M.D. Anderson under Minority Cancer Research with health disparity program to start South Asian protocol for various cancers
- 2009      Raised \$2300 under “Zee Memorial Fund” and helped families in crisis
- 2009      Successfully hosted first major Bangladeshi Convention in Houston - FOBANA 2009.  
Houston Mayor Bill White proclaimed July 2, 3, and 4 as the FOBANA Day  
Honored Freedom Fighters  
Displayed Mobile Bangladesh Liberation War Museum in coordination with Bangladesh Liberation War Museum  
Declared ‘Houston Declaration against Genocide’
- 2010      Sent proposal to UN Mission to declare Shaheed Minar to be recognized as a symbol of the International

### **Mother Language Day**

- 2010** Handed over engineering drawing of Shaheed Minar to the Ambassador at Washington DC and PR to UN at New York
- 2010** Nobel laureate Dr. Muhammad Yunus was formally invited to the ground breaking ceremony of the Bangladesh-American Center during his Houston visit
- 2010** His Excellency Akramul Qader, Ambassador of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to USA visited Bangladesh-American Center. He also unveiled the newly designed Bangladesh Association, Houston website (<http://www.bangladesh-association.com/>) and the newly designed Shaheed Minar with deck and stage on the Bangladesh-American Center land
- 2010** Bangladesh Association, Houston's history and achievements published

# Major Activities throughout the year

Fund raising for Bangladesh-American Center  
International Mother Language Day (IMLD) celebration  
Youth activities and educational seminars  
Free Medical Clinic  
Bangla School and literature activities  
Bangladesh Mobile Consular Services  
Emergency Fund for those in need during unforeseen emergency  
Bangladesh Independence Day Program and Festivities  
Bangladesh Victory Day Program and Festivities  
Picnics and outdoor activities  
Bangla New Year Celebration (Boishakhi Mela, Rabindra/Nazrul Jayanti)  
Magazine Publication  
Sports activities and competition (Tennis, Basketball, Bridge, Table Tennis etc.)  
Children Sports Activities  
Graduate Reception

# Facts

Serving the people of Bangladeshi origin living in Houston since 1978

Members vary between 750-1000 families

Owns a 4 acre land (all paid for) for community center - Bangladesh-American Center

Successfully held Federation of Bangladeshi Associations in North America (FOBANA) Convention in 2009

Successfully held North America Bangla Literature and Culture Convention (NABLCC) in 2005

Celebrates national and international events with other community organizations

Liaison to the United States Justice Department and FBI and Houston Mayor's International Affairs and International Development

Closely Work with City, State, and National in variety of community services

Helps needy family and arrange funeral regardless of membership

Holds free and fair election every two years

Secular with respect for all religions

Received numerous proclamations and citations from city and state

Email group and website serves as a hub to disseminate information regarding community affairs and emergencies

The web site <http://www.bangladesh-association.com/> is on #1 spot in Yahoo! and Google search for Bangladesh Association

For more information

[www.bangladesh-association.com](http://www.bangladesh-association.com)



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