

Bangladesh High Commission

Canberra

Press Release

(28 July 2011)

Remembrance of W A S Ouderland, Bir Pratik

H. E. Lieutenant General Masud Uddin Chowdhury, High Commissioner for Bangladesh to Australia presented a floral wreath to the “Memorial Wall” of Mr. W A S Ouderland, Bir Pratik on 24 July 2011 during his recent visit to Perth, Western Australia to pay tribute and respect to the valiant Freedom Fighter. The Memorial wall is located at Lance Howard Memorial Gardens of Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth, Western Australia. Mr. W A S Ouderland was the only foreign national who was awarded gallantry award Bir Pratik for his exemplary contribution during our War of Liberation. During the ceremony H.E. the High Commissioner was accompanied by Vice President Dr Ruhul Amin Salim and General Secretary Mr. Nazmus Sadat Shibli of Bangladesh Australia Association of Western Australia (BAAWA), officials of Bangladesh High Commission, visiting officials of Bangladesh Government and expatriate Bangladesh community members living in Perth.

Mr. W.A.S. Ouderland was born on 06 December 1917 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. During our War of Liberation he was posted as the CEO of Bata Shoe Company based in Tongi. Brutal repression of unarmed Bengalis by the Pakistani occupation army reminded him of the similar brutalities perpetrated by the Nazis in occupied Europe. He fully appreciated the legitimacy of Bengali resistance against the brute forces of occupation. He felt the acute need to make the world aware of the extent of genocide. As he was able to move freely as a foreigner, he took photographs of the atrocities committed by the occupation forces and their agents. He then passed these photographs to the world press.

As CEO of a major multinational, he enjoyed close access to higher echelon of the occupation forces. Indeed, he had close personal relationship with Gen Tikka Khan and Gen Niazi the then Military Governor and the Commander of the Eastern Command, Pakistan Armed Forces. He maintained the appearance of friendship to the Pakistani top brass in order to avail sensitive information. He

then passed this vital information on to the Mukti Bahini (Freedom Fighters). As the War progressed, he secretly began to train and assist local youths around the Tongi area in the art of guerilla resistance. He sent his family away from occupied Bangladesh so that he could turn his residence into a safe haven for our Freedom Fighters and their weapons.

He settled in Perth, Western Australia and died after prolonged ailment on 18 May 2001 at the age of 84. His love and concern for Bangladesh was undiminished until his last days. In accordance with his gallantry award he was buried with Bangladesh colours.
