

Staff Reporter

Capital's five-star Ruposhi Bangla Hotel closed from Monday for 16 months to re-emerge as Inter Continental Dhaka, bringing back to many the memory of its historic role during Bangladesh's War of Liberation.

The lone five-star hotel in the city that time, Inter Continental Dhaka hosted a series of historic meetings between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Pakistani military ruler Gen. Yahya Khan and Pakistan People's Party leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto aimed at a peaceful transfer of power to the Awami League, which received an overwhelming mandate in the 1970 general election.

Sheltered in this hotel a few foreign journalists watched the bloody crackdown of Pakistani troops on the Bengalis on March 25, 1971 after Mujib-Yahya-Bhutto talks collapsed. Holed up in the hotel the journalists sent the first dispatches telling the world about the start of the Pakistani genocide that continued during the nine-month War of Liberation before Bangladesh gained independence on Dec. 16, 1971.

Before named as Ruposhi Bangla, it was called Dhaka Sheraton, another international hotel chain which took over the management from the Inter Continental group.

Officials said on Monday the hotel will be renovated under an agreement between state-run Bangladesh Services Limited and Inter Continental Hotels Group (Asia Pacific) Pvt Ltd (IHG) signed on 19 February 2012.

The group will run the hotel for a 30-year term.

Shahidus Sadik, Manager Marketing and Communication said the hotel was closed to guests and all its commercial activities stopped from Monday.

The renovation will cost Tk 400 crore, which will be provided by Bangladesh Services Limited.

The renovation will increase the size of a room to 40 square meters from the existing 26 square meters and bring down the number of rooms to 226 from the existing 272.

The dining hall and swimming pool will also be relocated apart from adding some new services.