

# Historic March

Maulana Bhasani at the Paltan

## 'Bangalees Do Not Fear Bullets'

As reported in the *Ittefaq* of Dhaka, Mar. 10, 1971.

Media Flashback



Bhasani in full flow: Compromise? Nobody will get away with it!

At a massive gathering at the Paltan Maidan on March 9, 1971, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani declared amid thunderous applause, "If nothing is done by March 25 according to the orders of Sheikh Mujib, then I shall join Mujib and begin a ferocious movement like that of 1952."

The NAP leader called on President Yahya Khan to accept the independence of East Bengal, just as the British had had the foresight to accept India's independence.

"Even after tremendous injustice and repression everywhere, brutality of the Jalianwallabagh killings, and unleashing a genocide on the soil of India, the all-powerful British government could not save its skin in the end. At last, good sense prevailed, and instead of turning this subcontinent into an enemy, they decided that to leave amicably would be the more sensible thing to do," Bhasani told the crowd.

Bhasani said that the sun no longer rose on the British Empire, on which the sun was never supposed to set. That is the brutal reality of the world, he said.

"That's why I say to Yahya, this is enough, no more. Nothing good will come out of anymore bitterness. Leave me to my religion and I'll leave you to your's—you should accept East Bengal's independence on that principle", Bhasani said.

A huge number of people gathered to hear Maulana Bhasani at this meeting organised by the "Coordinating Committee of the Independent Bengal Movement". At the meeting, only Ataur Rahman Khan spoke apart from Bhasani. The meeting's resolutions were read out by Mashtur Rahman, a leader of NAP.

Amid tremendous ovation, Maulana Bhasani told the Paltan gathering that no one should distrust Sheikh Mujib and think he might compromise with the declaration he made at the Race Course Ground on March 7.

"Don't distrust Mujib for anything. I know Mujib very well. I taught him politics myself," the Maulana said, adding, "I love Mujib more than even

my own three sons. During my long political career, I have worked with 31 secretaries when I've been presidents of various organisations, and Mujib was the best of the lot.

"In those days, I did not have any money to speak of, there weren't so many red caps around. In those dark days, Mujib and I worked together.

"Compromise? If anyone compromises, whether it is Mujib or Bhasani, nobody will get away with it!" Bhasani thundered.

The Maulana declared in a powerful tone, "East Pakistan will be independent. Pakistan will not remain as one, we will not keep it undivided. Nobody has the power to stop it, not even Yahya's father. Bangalees do not fear bullets, arrows, axes, machetes."

The Maulana continued, "I don't believe in non-violence. Allah and the Prophet (sm) did not preach that either. Just as the oppressor is guilty, so is

the one who endures and accepts oppression. There cannot be any cooperation with the oppressor."

The Maulana then offered Yahya a piece of advice.

"If you want the well-being of West Pakistan's 47 million people, then tomorrow you will accept East Bengal's independence, you were a servant of the English, then you must know their philosophy too. The moment the English realised that their empire in India had no chance of survival, then they showed the good sense of getting out two years earlier," Bhasani said.

The British departure from India proved that a nation could not be kept suppressed, the Maulana said, adding that the British did a quick march out of India just so that its good business and other relations would not be harmed.

"You have a good chat with Daulatana, Bhutto and others. Then come to Dhaka after two or three days. There is no need to hurry. Then, after coming here, just accept East Bengal's independence", Maulana said.

He strongly condemned the killing of unarmed Bangalees by army troops, and told the president, "Your heroic army cannot capture Kashmir. When India tramples underfoot all international norms by occupying Kashmir, you can't send your heroic force. But you can kill the people of this country in the name of law and order!"

Then he fired a volley in the direction of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by saying, "you don't understand the meaning of democracy. There is no example in the history of the world of parliament being boycotted like this. Bengal's majority party

will enact whatever law it sees fit, the minority parties will have to reason with it and give reasonable proposals."

"Your talk of transfer of power is nothing but a lot of fairy tales," Bhasani said of Yahya. "If you don't know the history of the world, then at least learn the history of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. The British sun has set, the Muslim League, Ayub Khan have fallen. Bangalee people's demands cannot be suppressed through killings. There is still time. Let us divide the country while there is still a chance to maintain business relations and exchange ambassadors. If you want to play games of majority-minority, then do it in West Pakistan, we have no objection."



Students began preparing

(Compiled by Ittefaq Ahmed Chowdhury and Ekram Kabir. Translated by Sabir Mustafa.)

March 9, 1971

### More Media Flashback

#### MUJIB'S DIRECTIVE—EXEMPTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

The following exemptions and clarifications were issued pursuant to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's directive, according to Mr. Tajuddin Ahmed, General Secretary of the East Pakistan Awami League:

(1) Banks: shall remain open for banking operations from 9 am to 12-30 pm and for administrative purposes upto 3 pm. Banks shall only open for deposits, inter-bank clearance within Bangla Desh and cash transactions for the following purposes:

(a) Payment of wages and salaries as in previous week.

(b) Bonafide personal drawings of upto Rs. 1000.

(c) For purchase of industrial raw materials necessary for running mills and factories, including sugarcane for sugar mills, jute for jute mills, etc.

(2) No remittances shall be effected outside Bangla Desh either through State Bank or otherwise.

(3) State Bank: shall only remain open for the purpose of enabling above banking operations to be carried out and not for any other purpose.

(4) EPWAPDA: only such sections shall remain open as are necessary for supply of electricity.

(5) EPADC: only for the purpose of ensuring supply of fertiliser and diesel to power pumps.

(6) Coal supplies should be effected for brickfields, and jute seeds and rice seeds distribution should be effected.

(7) Movement of food supplies should be maintained.

(8) Treasury and AG office shall remain open to pass cheques only for any of the purposes mentioned above.

(9) Relief and rehabilitation work in the cyclone-affected areas should continue.

(10) Post and Telegraph office: only for the purpose of letters, telegrams and money orders within Bangla Desh, but Press telegrams may be set outside Bangla Desh. Post office savings bank shall remain

open.

(11) EPRTO: shall function throughout Bangla Desh.

(12) Supply of water and gas shall be maintained.

(13) Health and sanitation services shall be maintained.

(14) Police shall carry out the duty of maintenance of law and order assisted if necessary by Awami League volunteers.

(15) Semi-Government bodies other than those exempted shall continue to observe hartal.

(16) All exemptions granted in the previous week shall remain in force.

(THE DAWN, Karachi—March 10, 1971)

#### Chattra League Approves Declaration of Independent Bangladesh

An urgent meeting of the central committee of Chattra League, chaired by its president Nure Alam Siddiqi, was held at the Sergeant Johurul (Qbal) Hall Canteen yesterday (Tuesday).

In a political resolution the student leaders approved the declaration of independent Bangladesh which was brought up at the students meeting at 'batala' organised by Chattra League and DUCSU by the Independent Bangladesh Student Action Committee.

In another resolution the student leaders recommended that a 'national government' be formed by the Father of the Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

At the meeting a new committee with CL president Nure Alam Siddiqi, Gen. Secy. Shahjahan Siraj, DUCSU Vice President A S M Abdur Rab and General Secretary Abdul Quddus Makhani formed 'Independent Bangladesh Student Action Committee' to enhance the cause of independent Bangladesh.

In a resolution the student leaders condoled the death of CL worker Faruk Iqbal and numerous other martyrs who laid down their lives protest-



ing the West Pakistani aggression on our soil.

**Mujib/Bhashani Talk**

There was a round of talk between NAP Chief Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and AL Chief Sheikh Mujibur Rahman yesterday (Tuesday) affirmed a concerned source.

The two leaders talked over telephone just after Mr Bhashani arrived from Santosh in Dacca for addressing a public meeting here— added the source.

It is likely that both the leaders talked at a length over the existing political situation of the country. Another round of talk went on for about two and a half hours between a NAP leader and two AL leaders confirmed APP.

**President Expected**

RAWALPINDI, March 9: President General Yahya Khan is expected to visit East Pakistan in a few days. Today in an official handout this news was disclosed — APP.

**Curfew in Rajshahi**

A curfew was imposed by the Martial Law Authority in Rajshahi from yesterday (Tuesday). An eight hour curfew was imposed from 9 O'clock Tuesday night — disclosed sources in Dacca. This curfew will continue starting from nine in the night till five in the morning daily, until further notice — APP.

**Wali Khan will Come to Dacca**

KARACHI, March 9: NAP Chief Wali Khan today disclosed here that he will go to Dacca to have a round of talk with AL Chief Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. He is likely to discuss over the current political situation of the country with Mujib. Mr Wali Khan returned from London today. — APP

(Compiled from the *Ittefaq* of Mar. 10, 1971 by Ittefaq Ahmed Chowdhury and Ekram Kabir.)

### Feature

### Education

## Creating Access to Education for Girls

There are many people in Bangladesh, sometimes illustrious, sometimes little-known, who have devoted their lives to the cause of delivering others from the abyss of illiteracy, ignorance, superstition and poverty. The efforts and accomplishments of these people are often remarkable, especially in backward, remote and isolated areas.

One such personality is politician and philanthropist Kanteswar Barman of Aditmari Upazila (subdistrict), situated 12 km west of Lalmonirhat district town in northern Bangladesh. Although the inadequate national railway, part of the legacy of the British Raj, traverses the area, until recently most parts were almost inaccessible, being served by dirt roads and oxcarts only.

With a 1991 population of about 140,000 on an area of 194 sq km and with over 70 per cent people owning no land or less than one acre, Aditmari is a desperately poor area. Chronic poverty and mass illiteracy (male 74%, female 90%) are a major development challenge in Aditmari.

Kanteswar Barman was born here in the late nineteenth century and lived a full life, preoccupied with social service, until his death in 1967. A life-long bachelor, Kanteswar Barman was a member of the then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) Legislative Assembly.

To spread the light of education among his people, he established several schools and donated all his landed-property to meet the expenses of these institutions.

In memory of this illustrious son of the soil, the local people established the Kanteswar Barman Secondary Girls' School in a modest thatched building in 1986. In response to a request from the local community, Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), a large Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) working in northern Bangladesh, built an improved 4-classroom building with corrugated iron sheet roof in 1990 and another 3-classroom building with micro-concrete tile-roof in 1991. RDRS provided the design and supervised the construction

while the community provided 50% of the cost.

The total construction costs of the two buildings measuring 21 X 6 metres and 16 X 6 metres were Tk 285,000 and Tk 220,000 respectively. Both the buildings have foundations of burnt brick, one-metre-high brick and plaster walls, and RCC (reinforced concrete) pillars supporting trusses (steel trusses for the tin roof and wooden trusses for the micro-concrete tiled roof). The buildings incorporate prefabricated components manufactured from locally available materials and have movable partitions made from woven bamboo.

Kanteswar Barman School serves 10 surrounding villages with a population of about 20,000. Eight hundred eight

girls now attend the school — 516 at primary level and 292 at the secondary level. They are taught by 16 teachers.

Many girls walk about 10 km a day to and from school! In such a poor area, the financial circumstances of the school are poor, although the governing body of the school, headed by the local MP, raises funds from the community and receives a small grant from the government.

According to the headmistress of the school, Mrs Shireena Begum, out of a total of 11 secondary schools in Aditmari, Kanteswar Barman School is the only one exclusively for girls. There are nine with co-education and 1 for boys only. She says that in a pre-dominantly Muslim society, where free mixing of boys and girls is restricted, schools exclusively for girls are necessary to increase girls' education.

Education of girls and women is fundamental for development, but in Bangladesh, the widespread shortage of school buildings excludes a large number of children, especially girls, from access to the formal education system. RDRS has been building and improving schools for nearly two decades. In the last four years alone, RDRS has newly-built or re-constructed over 100.

ALMOST every day for the past two summers convoys of buses have picked their way through checkpoints controlled by rival militias, to deliver school-children to 'peace' camps outside the war zones of Beirut. In schoolyards, community centres and other available facilities, the children of Lebanon's bitter mosaic have been brought together to play, to share experiences and to learn that their neighbours are really not so different.

Boys and girls aged 5 to 12 have attended the camps with the blessing of parents who are desperate that their children should gain some sense of life in Lebanon beyond the daily fear, tensions and suspicions of a war already much older than they are. The children spend their days in camp activities with peers who otherwise might have grown to be mortal enemies.

They are supervised by young people aged 18 to 25 who have been trained to help the younger ones develop memories which are rich in positive experiences, to foster openness, to accept their companions' differences and to have confidence in a more promising future.

This Education for Peace programme was initiated by the UNICEF Office in Beirut early in 1989, when a new wave of violence closed schools and confined children to their homes and bomb shelters.

"We were discussing ways of reaching the children," recalls Andre Roberfroid, the UNICEF Representative at that time. "We had often discussed the fact that for 15 years the kids had been growing up separate from one another without any physical chance to meet. And then one day at the end of May, when the city had been under daily shelling, we decided to try to get the children together."

A training session was quickly put together for young people with some experience in scout and other types of camps who could act as monitors. The response was enormous. The first camp, organized entirely by UNICEF, was held in early July in the village of Khyara. About 130 children from very different cultural and religious backgrounds lived together for two weeks far from the nation's hostilities.

The camp monitors included university students, teachers and other young people. Their trainers emphasized one message throughout: "Get to know each other and you

## Education that Brings in Peace

will realize that you can live together easily. If you try to know each other by doing something of value together, something for children perhaps, no one will question your motives."

Roberfroid remembers being impressed and surprised by the reactions of the trainee monitors. "I was not surprised to see the young children coming to camp. I expected to see that happen, but I thought the older ones, after their exposure to years of war, would not be able to feel

something positive.

But they were not hardened at all. It was as if they had been thirsty for something like this for many years. They drank it in like someone coming out of the desert."

UNICEF arranged and financed transportation for the children under its flag, advising some 17 factions only that they were taking the children to a summer camp and that they needed permission to cross the checkpoints.

Halfway into the first camp other organizations followed suit, with day camps operating under the Education for Peace banner at playgrounds, schools and other facilities. UNICEF managed the curriculum and training of all monitors as well as transportation and insisted only that children, including those in Palestinian refugee camps, must come from more than one area of the country so the children could mix and learn from one another.

"The challenge was not to repair what the war had destroyed, but to reconstruct what the war had twisted,"

Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

Successful military operations against rebel-held areas of Mozambique, and the initiation of a peace process, made hundreds of thousands more people accessible to relief. Following a joint United Nations/Government analysis of the situation, a fourth appeal was made for international assistance for 1.4 million internally displaced persons and 154,000 returning refugees.

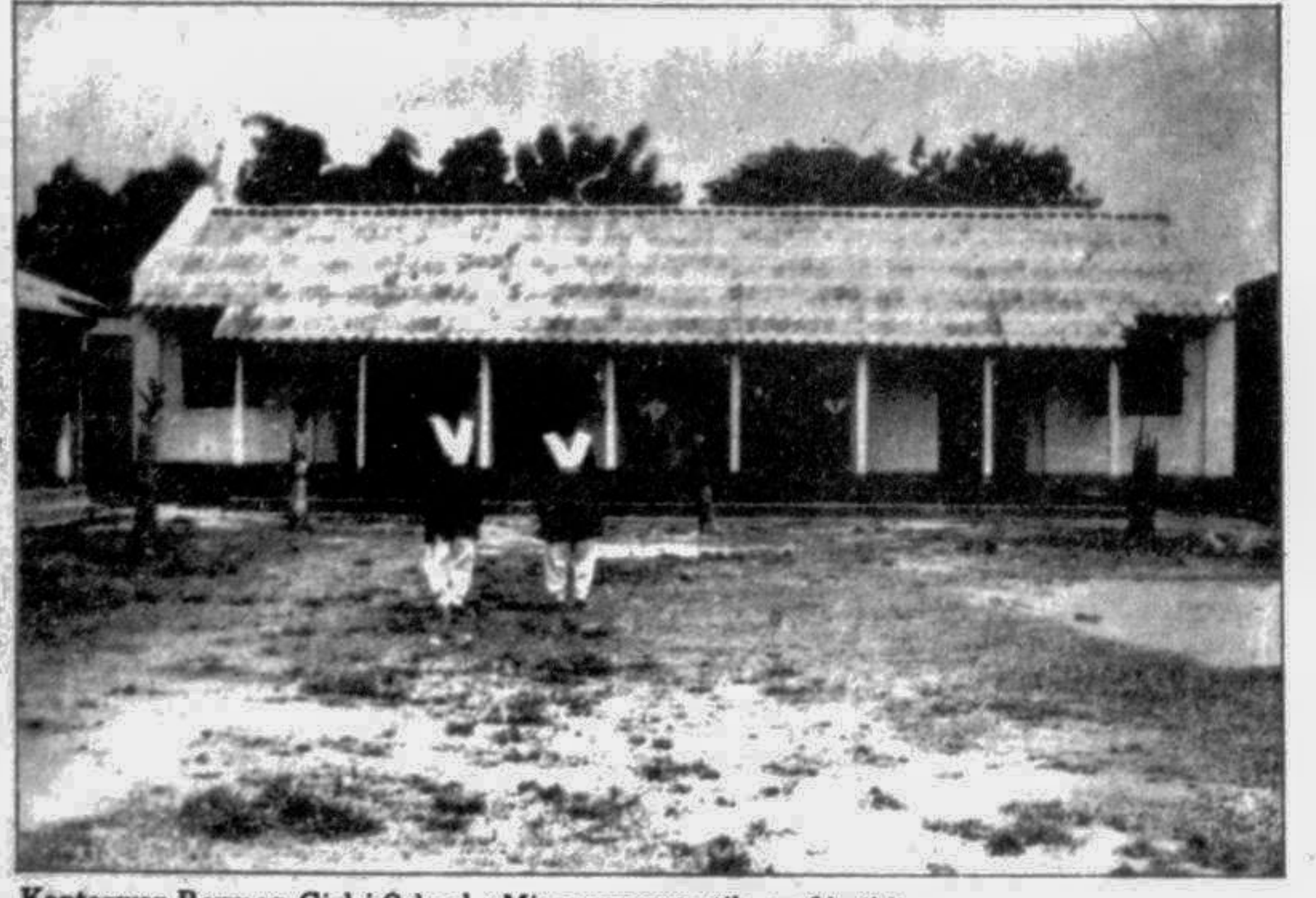
In Namibia, UNICEF support until March was largely focused on the reintegration of returnees during the transition to independence. UNICEF, however, was also active in drought relief efforts, and provided support during a malaria epidemic in northern regions of the country.

There were more than 5 million Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan in 1990, and another 2 million were homeless in Afghanistan itself. Crop failures in northern Afghanistan caused severe hunger during the 1989/90 winter months, and a joint United Nations effort was launched to feed vulnerable groups and provide blankets and essential drugs. UNICEF increased its efforts during the year to immunize children and women and to provide ORS.

During the year, appeals were also made for relief and rehabilitation in Iran and the Philippines (earthquakes). In China, Madagascar, the Republic of Korea and Tanzania (flooding), and in Western Samoa (cyclone), responded with appropriate combinations of shelter, essential drugs and medical supplies, basic food and feeding supplies, and provisions for potable water.

Outbreaks of cholera in Mozambique and Zambia required basic drugs, water treatment, medical supplies and laboratory equipment. Vaccines and related supplies were sent to Nicaragua in response to a measles outbreak, and to Benin and Tanzania to fight a meningitis epidemic. Medical and food supplies for 210,000 people were dispatched to Rwanda after the harvest failed.

Special contributions for specific-purpose emergency programmes in 13 countries totalled US\$28.3 million. Fourteen countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa also fully utilized the Executive Director's Emergency Reserve Fund of US\$4 million for the year. — UNICEF



Kanteswar Barman Girls' School: Micro-concrete tile-roof building.



UNICEF/WHO