

Historic March

March 12, 1971



American Wheat for Cyclone Victims Diverted to Karachi

Another Attempt to Starve Bangladesh Economy, Says Mansur Ali

CHITTAGONG, March 12: A US flat vessel, Monte Cello Victory, carrying wheat to the tune of 47,000 tons, was scheduled to reach Chittagong port on March 6. But the vessel did not reach the port till the writing of this report at 10:30 pm on March 12.

A spokesman of the Port Directorate told this correspondent on Friday that the agents of the vessel apprehended that the vessel might have been diverted to Karachi.

Mansur Ali's Statement:

Meanwhile Mr Mansur Ali, leader of the Awami League Parliamentary Party of East Pakistan Assembly, has issued in Dacca the following statement on Friday:

"Report received to the effect that a US ship bound for Chittagong with wheat for the cyclone-ravaged areas of Bangladesh has been diverted by the Islamabad Government to Karachi is highly disquieting.

"We demand an immediate report from the concerned authorities. We know from bitter experience that the actions of the Central bureaucrats have all along been calculated to starve the economy of Bangladesh of vital resources. Controlling as they do the instruments of exploitation, they have used their powers to divert every resource away from Bangladesh.

"The awakened masses of Bangladesh are prepared for every sacrifice. The strength of a united people will humble

the exploiters and their bureaucratic lackeys who will before long be brought to account before the people."

Student Leaders Warn Hoarders

FOUR members of the Independent Bengal Students Action Committee yesterday (Friday) in a joint statement warned ambitious members of the business community and stock holders against any conspiracy to thwart the movement of the people of Bangladesh.

The leaders warned that serious punitive measures would be taken against anyone who created an obstacle in the path of freedom.

In the statement, the leaders said with deep resentment that, some members of the business community and stockholders are in a conspiracy against the people.

"They are trying to create an artificial crisis in the province by holding back essential commodities and selling them later at an increased price.

"These people are indifferent to the cause of the people of Bangladesh". The statement pointed out these people as traitors of the nation and warned them not to cause further damage.

Among those who signed the statement were, Nur-e-Alam Siddiqui, Shahjahan Shiraj, A.S.M. Abdur Rab and Abdul Qudus Makhan.



Wali Khan Due in Dhaka Today

NATIONAL Awami Party chief Khan Abdul Wali Khan is expected to come to Dhaka from Karachi today. He will have a round of discussion with Awami League chief Sheikh Mujibur Rahman about the prevailing political situation in the country.

Ataur Rahman Meets Mujib

MR Ataur Rahman Khan, Chief of Pakistan National League on Friday called on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Dhanmondi residence of the AL chief, reports APP. Pir Saifuddin, a Council Muslim League MNA-elect from the Punjab, also met Mujib. This was his second meeting with the AL chief.

Yahya Due Today

KARACHI, March 12: President Yahya Khan who arrived here today from Rawalpindi en route to Dacca to break the present constitutional deadlock is reported to have prepared a new proposal for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, reports ENA.

A BBC broadcast monitored here this evening quoting its special correspondent in Karachi said President Yahya is expected to arrive in Dacca tomorrow with a new proposal for the Awami League chief in a bid to break the present constitutional deadlock. The report adds among



My Golden Bengal, I Love Thee: New national anthem of Bangladesh adorn wall of Sgt Jahurul Huq Hall (formerly Iqbal Hall).

others in the proposal President Yahya Khan is likely to ask Awami League to form provincial government in East Pakistan. The other provinces in West Pakistan would also be asked to form similar governments.

Mujib's Conditions Not Undemocratic

THE high command of the Bahawalpur United Front have appealed to the President Gen Yahya Khan, and leaders of political parties of W. Pakistan to rise to the occasion with magnanimity and statesmanship to protect and safeguard the unity and integrity of Pakistan by accepting the conditions set out by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, according to Dawn.

The high command which met under the chairmanship of its convener, Chaudhury Farzand Ali, discussed at length the present political situation in the country and described it as "dreadful and grave."

Lie

Tajuddin Ahmed, General Secretary, Provincial Awami League today in a statement termed reports that, "the letter sent by Mr Bhutto to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was seriously under consideration" as being utterly baseless and fabricated.

Yesterday (Friday) in a statement he also denied the news that Mr Khurshid, leader of Punjab Awami League carried a letter from President Yahya Khan for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Mr Tajuddin Ahmed expressed his shock that these untrue and fabricated stories were broadcast over radio.

Compiled by Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Ekram Kabir from the Ittefaq and Pakistan Observer of Mar 12, 1971

NAP Demands Judicial Probe Into Killings

THE Working Committee of East Pakistan National Awami Party (WAP) on Friday demanded to set up an enquiry committee with the Judges of the High Court to investigate the recent killings of the unarmed civilians, reports APP.

The meeting presided over by Mr. Mazaffar Ahmed, President of EPNAP also demanded compensation for the families of the victims. The meeting expressed its solidarity with the people's struggle and offered hearty congratulation to those who laid down their lives.

The meeting considered that the present movement was aimed at realising the rights of Bengalees who were being exploited by the 22 families and the agents of the imperialists for the last 23 years.

The meeting therefore urged all the nations — Sindhis, Baluchis and Pathans — to support the struggle of the Bengalees and also undertake similar struggle in their own areas to realise their rights. The meeting also congratulated workers and leaders of Baluchistan and Frontier Provinces who brought out processions in support of the demands of Bangladesh. The meeting criticised the repressive measures against these people.

I Shall Never Cease to Warn — Asghar Khan

LAHORE, March 12: Retired Air Marshal Asghar Khan today warned leaders of West Pakistan about the possibility of a divided Pakistan and a total disintegration and asked the leaders to act in a sensible way towards matters concerning the East Pakistan.

He cautioned the people of West Pakistan that a divided Pakistan shall not be able to survive by its own for more than five years.

It is unfortunate that some people in West Pakistan think that if Pakistan ultimately disintegrates, let it be now. But these people never gave it a serious thought that yet this division can be stopped if position measures are taken.

"We have very little time," he said, and added that everyone should try before matters go out of hand.

In an indirect reference to Mr Bhutto's speech on 28th February, he said, "the irony is that, the crime was committed in Lahore but it was Dacca who paid the price through bloodshed. Those who want to control the country with mere muscle are so weak in wit, that they often forget that the whole idea is nothing but sheer madness."

West Pakistani Leaders, Journalists Support Mujib's Call

LAHORE, Mar 12: Prominent intellectuals, journalists, political, cultural and trade union and student body workers have called for an immediate transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people, reports PPI.

In a joint statement issued here they expressed grave concern over the political situation obtaining in the country. They were of the opinion that the country was passing through such a crisis which was likely to disintegrate if an earnest endeavour to resolve it in a positive manner was not made without further delay.

They appealed to all democratic political organizations of the people and other elements and individuals to rise above limited group politics and try to restore a calm atmosphere conducive to mutual understanding. These elements should play a decisive role in establishing a democratic government, they said.

They were of the considered opinion that under present circumstances the dream of people's sovereignty and

restoration of democracy could not materialise without accepting the demands for the transfer of power after ending the martial law.

They felt that by remaining peaceful the East Pakistan people had given a practical proof of the fact they stood for national solidarity and integrity like their compatriots from the west wing.

The signatories to the statement include Malik Hamid Sarfaraz, General Secretary, Punjab AL, Mirza Muhammad Ibrahim, President, Railway Workers Union, Professor Eric Cyprian, Mr. Abdullah Malik, Mr. I. A. Rahman, Mr. Hamid Akhtar and Mr. Nisar Ushari, senior journalists, and other leaders representing cross-section of the people.

Accept Mujib's Conditions:

MR C. R. ASLAM, Secretary General of the pro-Peking National Awami Party (NAP) has appealed to President Yahya Khan to accept the conditions put forth by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for participation in the National Assembly, adds PPI.

He said in a press statement in Lahore that the pre-conditions of lifting martial law, withdrawing army personnel to barracks, holding inquiry into the firing incidents and transferring power to the elected representatives of the people were such as no lover of the country, the people and democracy could oppose them.

Campaign in West

LAHORE, March 11: Mr Saleem, Vice-President of all Pakistan AL, said here today, "we would launch a movement in west wing in the same manner the people of East Pakistan have successfully launched" in case the power was not transferred to the majority party elected by the people of Pakistan, reports APP.

Feature

Rashida Conquers Leprosy

FAIR and bright looking, with curly black hair and dark eyes, 18-year-old Rashida Khatun has a unique composure about her that tells of her determination and courage. She has had a troubled life-shattered early on by a devastating disease called leprosy. She suffered for two years without knowing anything about the disease, going from quacks to witch doctors without any result.

She then came under proper medication and supervision for three years from September 1987 to July 1990 from Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), a large Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) working in northern Bangladesh. During these years, she has been through intense physical and mental stress but remained unbowed and hopeful of conquering the disease and leading a normal



Rashida — cured of leprosy

life once again. Rashida lives in Taluk Harati Village, 6km southwest of Lalmonirhat District Town in northern Bangladesh. Her father Abdur Rahman is a small trader in jute, chili and tobacco. He has a little over 2 acres of agricultural land and is considered relatively well-to-do in the village. Abdur Rahman has two wives, three sons, and four daughters of whom two have been married off. Rashida is the youngest of the seven children.

When the disease first struck, Rashida developed skin lesions under the right eye, then gradually in her legs and body. At first she did not tell anyone and thought that these were temporary. The disease went from bad to worse and produced a deformity in her right hand. She began to develop claw-fingers and felt very weak. At this time Rashida, a

grade-8 student in the local Saralka High School, had to discontinue her studies.

Rashida's father spent a lot of money on local medications, herbs and talismans but there was no improvement. On 29 September 1987, an RDRS Health Worker detected Rashida's ailment as leprosy and started professional treatment supervision.

Leprosy has plagued mankind since time immemorial. Earliest records such as the Vedas (religious books of ancient India) mention the existence of leprosy as early as 600 BC. Leprosy spread to Europe in the middle ages reaching epidemic proportions in the 12th century and then declining gradually.

In 1873 the Norwegian doctor Amauer Hansen discovered the mycobacterium lepra which causes the disease but it was not until the early 1940s that Dapsone (DDS — Diamino-Diphenyle-Sulphone) was introduced for treatment of leprosy in the Indian subcontinent.

There are at least 15 million leprosy patients across the world with 9 million in Asia and about 200,000 in Bangladesh. The incidence is markedly higher in the poorer northern districts where RDRS works. With epidemic proportions (an estimated 10 cases per 1000 population) of leprosy in the RDRS working

area, RDRS started detection and treatment of patients in the early 1980s. Since then RDRS has built up considerable expertise in leprosy treatment with assistance from the Danish Bangladesh Leprosy Mission in Nilphamari.

After Rashida developed the deformity in her right hand, RDRS referred her to the Danish Bangladesh Leprosy Mission where she underwent reconstructive surgery. With continued treatment, the deformity was checked and the surgery partly restored the shape of her fingers. She requires further surgery to reshape her deformed hand. In the beginning Rashida received single-drug treatment but later she was given multi-drug therapy (3 drugs for 2 years instead of the single traditional drug for many years) to speed up her recovery. Multi-drug therapy is costly and needs intensive supervision.

By now RDRS has identified, treated and fully cured several thousand leprosy patients.

About 1600 patients are under treatment in 35 RDRS leprosy clinics. The priority now is to build greater social awareness about leprosy to help reduce superstition and help thousands of ailing Rashidas conquer the disease and lead a normal life. — (RDRS Feature)

Health

Health 2000 is Still a Long Way Off

IN 43 years, Chipango Samahongo has gone through ten childbirths. Only two of her children have survived. The others died before the age of one.

Chipango attributes her misfortune to the "gods of evil" inspired by witchcraft, even though five of the children's death certificates indicate "measles" — one of the six leading preventable child killers in Africa — as the real cause, while three other children died from malnutrition-related diseases.

Chipango's predicament is just one illustration of a problem that each year affects 12-14 million babies according to health experts. There are also about 48-55 million children under four years who are vulnerable to diseases that could easily be prevented. The solution would be Primary Health Care (PHC).

Health campaigns aimed at children are not new. In 1989 the World Health Organization (WHO) reported only 41 per cent of 118 million under-ones worldwide were protected against measles and 46 per cent against tuberculosis (TB).

As one expert put it, the figures came at a time when "we were already nine years into the Unicef immunisation programme and only a year to the deadline that a global 80 per cent immunisation level should be reached by December 1990."

Few nations in Africa boast about "meeting the deadline." As another health expert put it

Elias Nyakutemba writes from Lusaka

"The majority of nations missed the deadline and Africa and Unicef lost the decade — the question is whether we can catch up to the next deadline by the year 2000."

Doubts about the viability of health for all by 2000 have increased because in much of Africa today, government efforts to launch PHC programmes have been hampered by the combination of deep-seated socio-economic problems, warped planning usually targeted in favour of urban centres, harsh geography, the grip of cultural traditions injurious to health, and civil war.

Experts are fearful that mortality rates, which showed signs of slowing down in the Seventies and early Eighties, seem to be doing the opposite in several countries in the region.

Poor sanitation, rocketing inflation rates and lack of safe water has exacerbated the health risks to children. PHC has been set back further in many cases by lack of co-ordination, poor mobilisation and inadequate education to mothers who, according to a Unicef official: "Could have the food, but fail to feed correctly, or could have a child, but fail to take it for immunisation."

The immunisation levels are not only dismal throughout Africa, they are also clearly biased in favour of urban areas which have around 70-85 per cent of national health facilities, even though, on average, 55-60 per cent of the population is rural.

Despite government claims to be promoting public health, many are guilty of maladministration. As one health analyst put it: "We know it is not right for poor nations to spend 35 per cent or more of GNP on arms, but our governments keep doing that, leaving future resources (children) in the cold."

Most African countries do have official population policies, though in practice little is being done to halt explosive population growth rates as high as 3.8 per cent in some countries and averaging 3.1 per cent for the region.

In the African hinterland, there is an acute shortage of drug storage facilities often due to a lack of paraffin to keep fridges running or simply lack of money.

The task, said a Unicef official, "involves changing life styles," but governments are not doing nearly enough to change conditions on the ground. "Ours is a complemen-

tary role," he said. "On its own it becomes ineffective in the long run — governments have to play their part, educating and providing the services needed."

Yet even in the urban areas where roads and medicines are accessible, PHC workers still complain that transport is a problem, not only because it is often unavailable, but because there is not enough for everyone.

One PHC worker said: "It (transport) is constantly doing other errands when you need it because the government has left most hospitals and clinics without general transport and ambulances. The immunisation vehicle is never spared."

Unbroken, the chain starts soon after birth with a shot of BCG (for immunisation against tuberculosis). Polio and DPT doses begin at two months, followed by a measles vaccine at nine months. The child should have regular checks at the under-five clinic until the age of five.

In practice though, little of this is happening. As one health expert said: "International support on its own is useless unless governments begin to show greater sensitivity to the welfare of the people — otherwise, health for all by the year 2000 is just another bad joke." — Gemini News

Germany Spends Billions on Workers' Rehabilitation

IN an industrialized country with an efficient welfare system, the person who loses his job owing to serious illness or accident need not despair of ever working again. In the Federal Republic of Germany, state-pension schemes last year helped more than 40,000 people to learn new professions, upgrade their vocational qualifications or find other jobs in the companies they used to work for.

In all, the Federal Republic spent DM 5.3 billion on treatment and training for 815,000 people in 1989. In 774,000 cases, the benefits went on course, i. e. medical rehabilitation, for which many of the insured had to foot part of the bill themselves (DM 100 million in all). Nearly half of all

courses of medical treatment were for rheumatism (skeletal, muscular and connective tissue disorders). Among male patients, this was followed in order of frequency by cardiovascular complaints (18 per cent) and mental disorders (11 per cent). Among women, mental disorders ranked higher in the insurance scheme statistics, accounting for 16 per cent of medical treatments.

The heading mental disorders also embraces alcoholism and dependence on illicit or pharmaceutical drugs, where rehabilitation measures are particularly expensive and protected. In relation to the number of patients receiving treatment, the cost of such measures rose by 1.3 per cent in 1989 to account for 3.4 per cent of total expenditure.

Children whose mental or physical development is impaired by illness or accident, also receive follow-up treatment and rehabilitation assistance under the state insurance schemes. Here, the number of cases has steadily declined since 1986, falling from around 16,000 to just 14,300. (IN Press)

Southern Africa: life and death

