

A Happy Eid to All

Islam has two great festivals and it has been religiously enjoined that they be festivals pure. These two are occasions when not only the high and low of the community come together, but the Ummah can meet and mingle with members of other communities at the best of human courtesies — a festival. These are one's days to be liberal in one's attitude and generous in one's conduct.

As the Eid-ul-Fitr every year marks the value of continence in the life of the individual or of the community, so does this Eid-ul Azha come yearly to remind the importance of sacrifice. But festivals do have a way of making us lose sight of those underlying high thoughts that could, if pursued and practised, usher good life into the society. However, even without responding to such high ideals Eids can be great sources of social sustenance and rejuvenation if only for the sheer delight of it and the great expression of *bon homie* these set on.

Eid-ul Azha has lately been reduced to a great eating festival with little besides a hedonistic spell to give it a dubious distinction. Unrestrained seeking of the pleasures of the palate leads one to gluttony and the unpleasant consequences thereof. In a land perpetually short in livestock, society could have been more judicious in its emphasis on and choice of the sacrificial animal.

Similarly, thoughts about the condition of the brethren in faith — *ikhwanul muslimin* — all over the globe should be a matter of genuine concern on an occasion like this. If we would only feel at one with the Palestinians and our other brethren in their dire straits, we could very well forego a festive beef feast.

Whoever has the capacity among the Bengali Muslims goes for the Eid sacrifice. Let him sacrifice too his covetousness of things of mean worldly competition. In Bangladesh's socio-economic situation it could be unsurpassable virtue to eschew ostentation.

Our Eid greetings to all our fellow citizens.

Pilgrimage Tragedy

The tragic death of nearly two hundred pilgrims and injury to many more in a raging fire in Mina, near Makkah, has cast a pall of gloom over the performance of holy Hajj at the premier shrine of the Muslims. The shocking news proves to be specially devastating for the sub-continent because most of the casualties are from India and Pakistan. A lone death has been reported from the Bangladesh contingent of devotees. We express our sorrow at the sad demise of such a large number of devotees who went there from this part of the world to perform a most cherished religious duty. The painful condition in which they met their tragic end can only be imagined and let every Muslim bow his or her head in prayer on the Eid day for the salvation of the departed souls.

In this context we can refer to similar tragic incidents taking place during some Hajj seasons earlier on. This obviously is directly related to the growing pressure on the facilities and arrangements at the holy site from an ever increasing number of pilgrims. The management challenges are likely to be even bigger with every passing year. It is indeed a massive job to facilitate the performance of rituals by lakhs of people — this year 26 lakh of them — within a stipulated time-period. Even the congregation that spreads over no less than 10 days in not so spacious a place demands efficient management and a high degree of alertness.

After a few such tragedies during the Hajj, the security and safety aspect need to be reviewed by the Saudi government. The aim ought to be to improve safety conditions through better coordination and co-operation of the various agencies active at the site. Modern and sophisticated technology or equipment can be pressed into service for an early warning system and also to avoid tragedies on such a scale. Involved here is the image of the Muslim Ummah too. The safety and security aspects of the greatest Muslim congregation have to be fool-proof. We hope no such tragedies will befall the pilgrims seeking God's blessings in His own House.

Seed Time, the Seed Act

Today is the 17th of April. This one day and one little mango grove at Baidyatola, Meherpur, sprouted and snowballed and became history for a nation destined to do big things down the years.

For the two weeks following the genocide of March 25, 1971 everything was unpromisingly fluid for the Bengalee patriots — who had committed themselves to fighting a do-or-die war in the meantime. There were sporadic resistance now and then, soon to be over-run by the ruthless enemy having all the armour in the world — and the organisation and the resources, and most of all a conviction that they were doing a very right thing — ridding their holy land — Pakistan — of unclean heathens. It was the 17th of April marking the formation of the Provisional Bangladesh Government that for the first time told the world that the Bengalees were a nation and Pakistan was forcibly occupying their territory and would be driven out through the waging of a just war.

The victory of December 16, 1971 was the hand-work most of all of Tajuddin Ahmed, the Prime Minister, who warring in the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, won the day through indomitable courage, sheer power of conviction and unfailing wisdom and a genius for diplomacy as well as, yes, warfare. Tajuddin wouldn't have been the success he was unless supremely supported by Syed Nazrul Islam, Captain Mansur Ali and Kamruzzaman. The salute of this day goes first to the unknown martyrs and to Tajuddin. And the day wouldn't simply have been but for the all-out support of the then Indian government, and its people.

MUJIBNAGAR DAY

Recalling the Time

The following are reproductions from what appeared in the media of the time 26 years ago

Excerpts from the speech of Tajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister of the war-time Government of Bangladesh, at its ceremonial inauguration at Mujibnagar.

PAKISTAN is now dead and buried under a mountain of corpses. The hundreds and thousands of people murdered by the army in Bangladesh will act as an impenetrable barrier between West Pakistan and the people of Bangladesh. By resorting to pre-planned genocide Yahya must have known that he was himself digging Pakistan grave. The subsequent massacres perpetrated on his orders by his licensed killers on the people were not designed to preserve the unity of a nation. They were acts of racial hatred and sadism

on earth can unmake this new nation and sooner or later both big and small powers will have to accept it into the world fraternity.

It is, therefore, in the interest of politics as much as humanity for the big powers to put their full pressure on Yahya to cage his killers and bring them back to West Pakistan. We will be eternally grateful to the people of the USSR and India and the freedom loving people of all the countries for their full support they have already given us in this struggle. We would wel-



Tajuddin Ahmed, prime minister of the war-time government of Bangladesh addressing local and foreign journalists at Mujibnagar on April 17, 1971.

devoid of even the elements of humanity. Professional soldiers, on orders, violated their code of military honour and were seen as beasts of prey who indulged in an orgy of murder, rape, loot, arson and destruction unequalled in the annals of civilisation. These acts indicate that the concept of two countries is already deeply rooted in the minds of Yahya and his associates who would not dare commit such atrocities on their own countrymen.

Yahya's genocide is thus without political purpose. It serves only as the last act in the tragic history of Pakistan which Yahya has chosen to write with the blood of the people of Bangladesh. The objective is genocide and scorched-earth before his troops are either driven out or perish. In this time he hopes to liquidate our political leadership, intelligence and administration, to destroy our industries and public amenities and as a final act he intends to raze our cities to the ground. Already his occupation army has made substantial progress towards this objective. Bangladesh will be set back 50 years as West Pakistan's parting gift, to a people they have exploited for twenty-three years for their own benefit.

This is a point of major significance to those great powers who choose to ignore this largest single act of genocide since the days of Belsen and Auschwitz. If they think they are preserving the unity of Pakistan, they can forget it because Yahya himself has no illusion about the future of Pakistan.

They must realise that Pakistan is dead, murdered by Yahya — and the independent Bangladesh is a reality sustained by the indestructible will and courage of 75-million Bengalis who are daily nurturing the roots of this new nationhood with their blood. No power

can similar support from the People's Republic of China, USA, France and Great Britain and others. Each in their own way should exercise considerable leverage on West Pakistan; and were they to exercise this influence, Yahya could not sustain his war of aggression against Bangladesh for a single day longer.

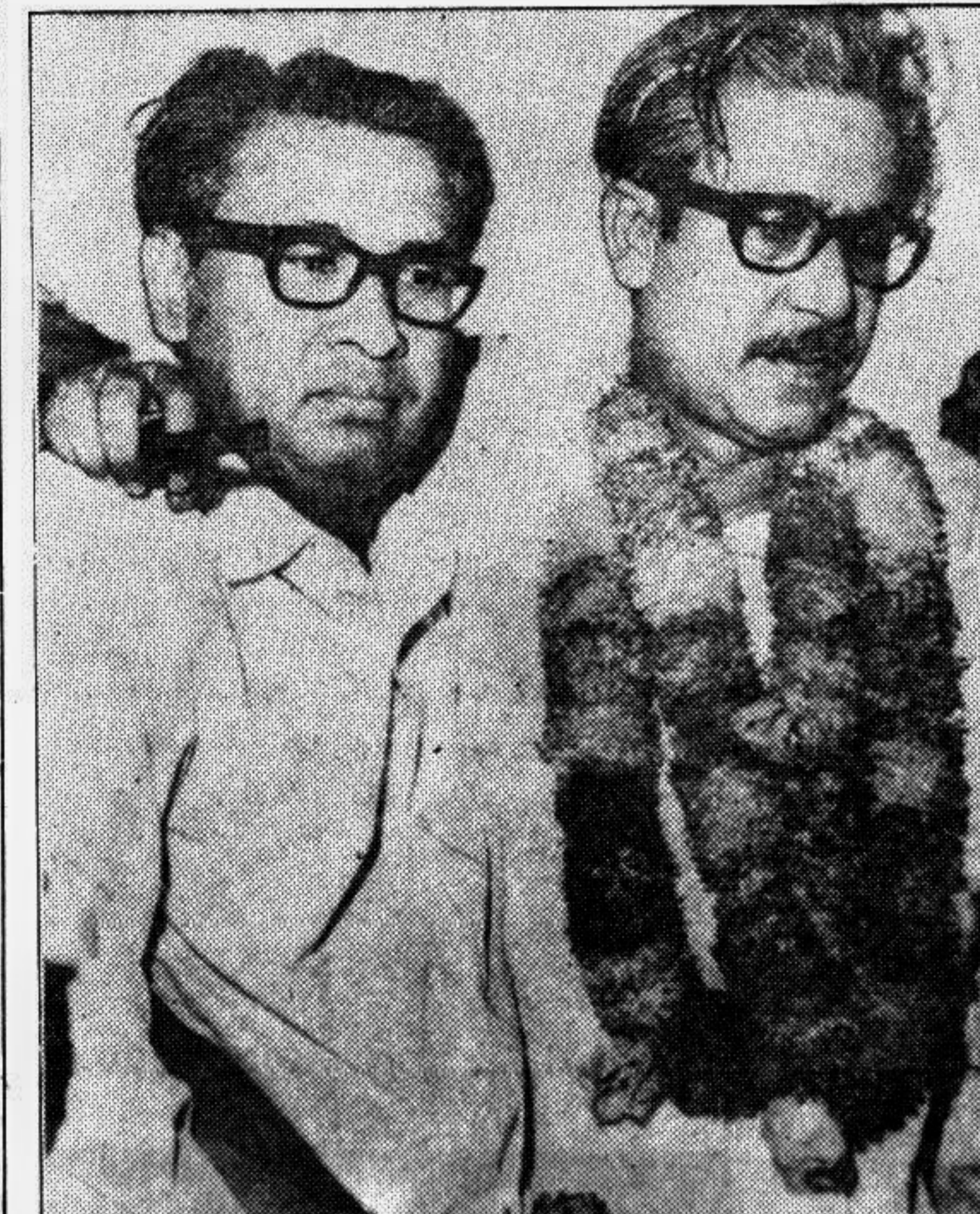
Bangladesh will be the eighth most populous country in the world. Its only goal will be to rebuild a new nation from the ashes and carnage left behind by Yahya's occupation army. It will be a stupendous task because we are already one of the world's poorest nations. But we now have cause and a people who have been hardened in the resistance, who have shed their blood for their nation and won their freedom in an epic struggle which pitted unarmed people against a modern army. Such a nation cannot fail in its task of securing the foundations of its nationhood.

In our struggle for survival we seek the friendship of all people, the big powers and the small. We do not aspire to join any bloc or pact but will seek assistance from those who give it in a spirit of goodwill free from any desire to control our destinies. We have struggled far too long for our self-determination to permit ourselves to become anyone's satellite.

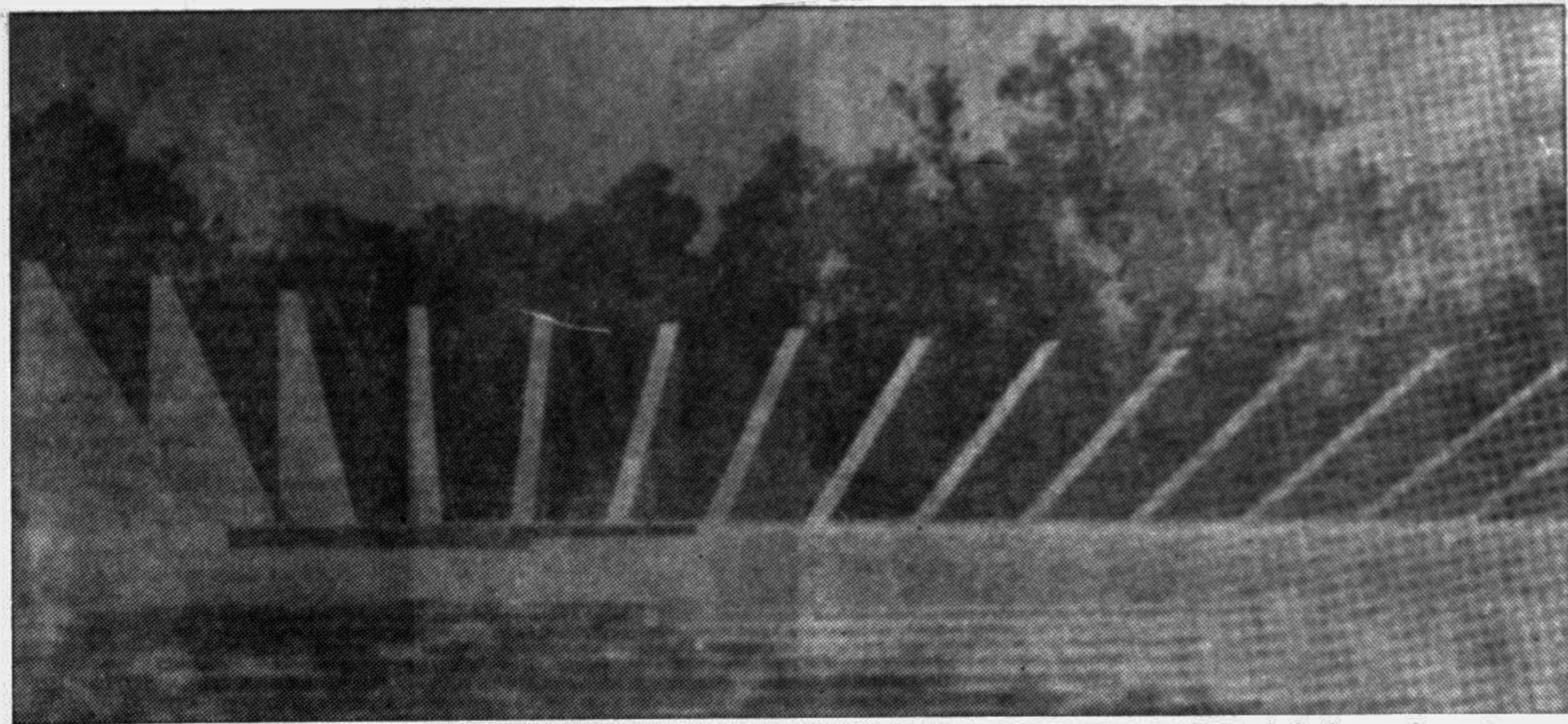
We now appeal to the nations of the world for recognition and assistance both material and moral in our struggle for nationhood. Everyday this is delayed a thousand lives are lost and more of Bangladesh's vital assets are destroyed. In the name of humanity act now and earn our undying friendship.

This we now present to the world as the CASE of the people of Bangladesh. No nation has a greater right to recognition, no people have fought harder for this right.

Joi Bangla



Tajuddin with Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after the former's return to Bangladesh.



The martyrs' memorial at Mujibnagar (Meherpur, Kushtia) where the war-time Government of Bangladesh was formed on April 17, 1971.

Bangladesh PM's Plea for Aid, Recognition

Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed's appeal to Nations, dated June 13, 1971

BANGLADESH Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed, today called upon the Big Powers, "in the name of the wronged people of Bangladesh", not to "interfere", in favour of a "blood-thirsty Pakistan against the forces of democracy."

"I urge them also not to try to prop up the crumbling economic base of the oppressive Government at Islamabad either, directly or through the World Bank and the IMF, unless it withdraws its occupation army of Bangladesh. Let there be no doubt anywhere that aid given to Islamabad now will be sucked, in cynical and devious ways, into its war machine and used to hold down the people of Bangladesh", Ahmed said in a broadcast to the nation from the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

Renewing his appeal to the world for arms for the freedom fighters of Bangladesh, Ahmed said they were fighting for democracy against a brutal dictatorship to uphold the freely expressed wishes of a vast section of mankind for a just political and economic order.

Appealing to the nations of the world to accord recognition to the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Prime Minister said this Government alone represented legitimacy "in our land, founded, as it is upon the freely expressed will of its people. Our people have completely repudiated the colonial rule based in West Pakistan and are now fighting to defend their freedom," he said.

Appeal to Arabs

Ahmed said "their case for recognition was based on this rather than on their suffering which had few parallels in history." I should like to assure those who have taken no position on our struggle or been only lukewarm towards it or opposed it outright, that the People's Republic of Bangladesh is on the map of the world and the determination of its 75-million people will keep it there.

"Is it rational in the interest of the nations to ignore so vast a section of mankind?" he asked.

In a special word to those in other Muslim and Arab countries who had not yet found it possible to condemn the mass slaughter in Bangladesh, the Prime Minister said: "It is a tragic error on their part to think that Yahya's hordes are waging a war of Islamic righteousness in Bangladesh. Their silence, therefore, condones colonialism and barbarism, their moral in some cases barely concealed. Material support to Islamabad puts them on the side of dictatorship and its well-documented crimes of arson, loot, rape and murder."

Ahmed said: "I want the Arabs to recall how they once fought to free themselves from the colonial rule of the Turks who were Muslims. Our struggle against West Pakistan-based colonialism is exactly analogous to their struggle against the Turks not very long ago."

Support Sought

Reminding the foreign countries that the people of Bangladesh had vowed to continue the war till the enemy was liquidated or forced to withdraw from their soil, Ahmed urged the nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America to support their struggle in the same way as, we supported their struggle against colonialism and imperialism. We say to the Big Powers: "Please step out of the strait-jacket of your short-sighted prudence and come out on the side of justice and democracy."

"You cannot regard massacres involving 75-million people and forcing five million to move out of their homes into another country as the private amusement of any government. Do not use your aid to aggravate the monumental wrong done to a peace and freedom-loving democratic people. Instead, use the lever to bring the paranoiacs in Islamabad to their senses," he added.

Ahmed said the War of Liberation was now in its 11th week and the valiant freedom fighters had put despair into Yahya's heart. The staggering casualty figure of the West Pakistan army testified to the success of the defensive operations. The twin methods of massive terror and murder had not succeeded in breaking the will of a nation determined to fulfill its destiny in freedom. The usurping enemy, on the other hand was in a hopeless mess.

He said the refusal of the people to co-operate had re-

sulted in an economic crisis which the military junta could not resolve without foreign aid. They had now resorted to demonetisation of Rs. 100 and Rs. 500 currency notes without paying their value. This was not only a plain admission of their economic desperation but a shameless attempt to rob the people of what was theirs in order to replenish the void in Islamabad's coffers.

Right Cause

Congratulating the people of Bangladesh on their heroic resistance, the Prime Minister said in the new phase of their struggle, the freedom-fighters were better organised and their ranks were swelling with new recruits. And they had a cause: their inalienable right to govern themselves and live with dignity in their own land.

The aim of the genocide, driving out of the people of Bangladesh, the elimination of the intellectuals and political leadership and the destruction

Big Powers of having "a large share" in the tragedy that was being perpetrated in Bangladesh today.

He said the Big Powers assisted the rise of dictatorship and in the setting up of a capitalist-bureaucratic-military oligarchy in Pakistan by giving it arms and economic aid without regard to the manner of their use.

US Accused

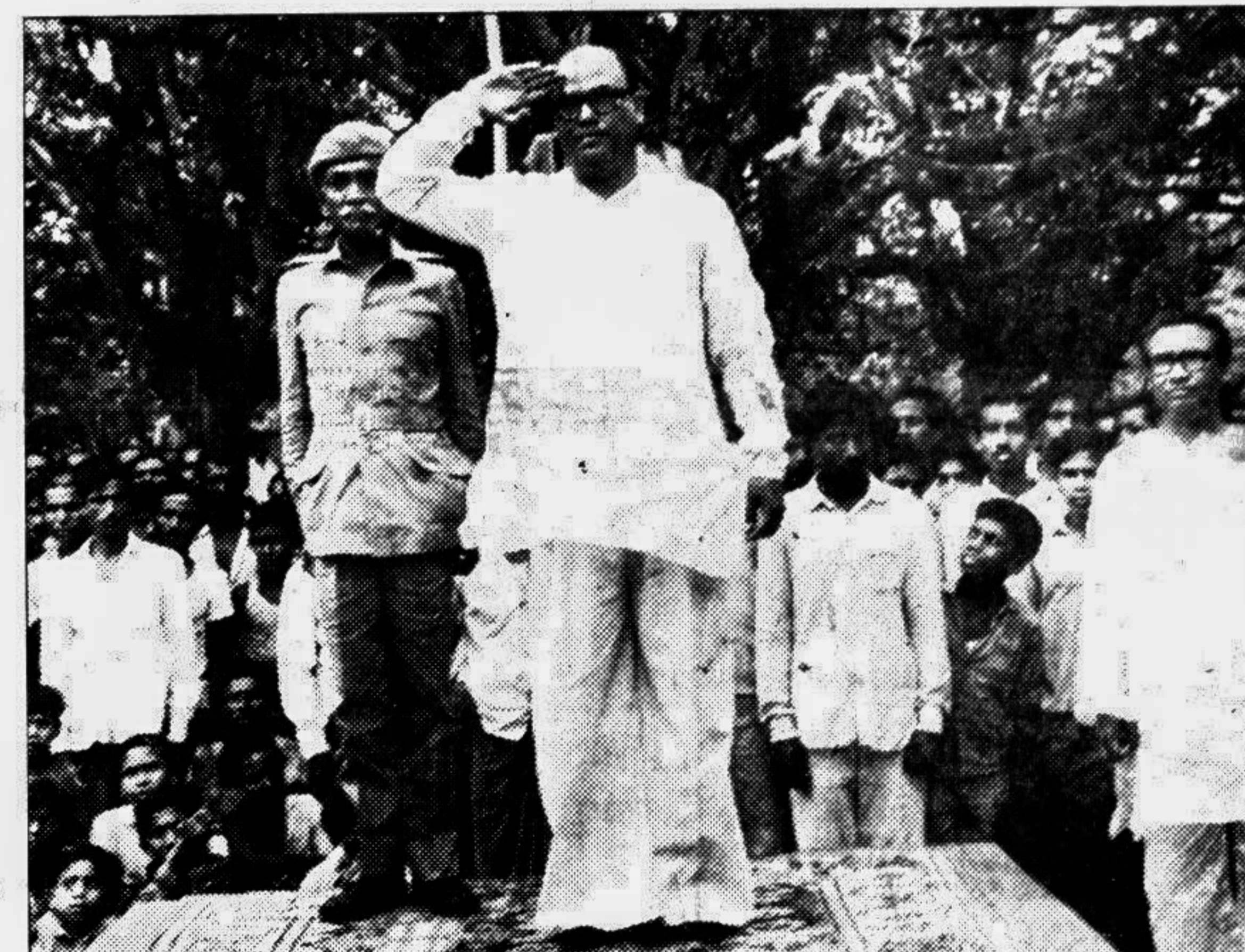
Without naming the Big Powers, the Prime Minister said they let this oligarchy grow at the expense of democratic Bangladesh. They must now recognise that the blood that strains Yahya's hands "is also on their hands. It is being realised by Americans themselves that the economic and military aid given to Pakistan by their country made possible the carnage in Bangladesh."

The Prime Minister complimented India for her efforts to shelter several million evacuees from Bangladesh who had

note with regret that even after the appeal of UN Secretary-General U Thant, which did not come a day too soon and which was the first indirect recognition of the situation created by the continuing terror and genocide in Bangladesh, the offer of help has not been commensurate with the dimension of the problem. "And now the monsoon and epidemics have added to the already unbearable distress of the evacuees", he said.

The Prime Minister, however, assured all concerned that the evacuees were keen to come back home and were actively trying to hasten the day of their return by joining the liberation forces. This was the only way they could return home.

"I also solemnly promise that those citizens of Bangladesh who have been unlawfully dispossessed of their houses, land and other property since 25 March will have these restored to them on their return", he said.



Mujibnagar, April 17, 1971: Acting President of the war-time government Syed Nazrul Islam receiving salute of Freedom Fighters and East Bengal Regiment immediately after taking oath.

of the present economic base was the complete political and economic subjugation of the Bengalis to the military lords and capitalists of West Pakistan, he said.

"To say that the methods employed by them (West Pakistan) to achieve their objectives is barbarous is inadequate. To call them bestial is a little unfair to some beasts."

"These methods and these objectives, however, make absolutely clear the nature of our enemy and the cause we are fighting for. We want the world to understand that we are fighting for nothing less than our existence as a nation," Mr Ahmed added.

Mr Ahmed also accused the

armed following the Pakistani army's plan of depopulating Bangladesh through systematic massacres and a ruthless scorched earth policy.

The Pakistani plan had succeeded in creating for India the problem of looking after the evacuees, which had constituted an undoubted strain on the economy.

Ahmed said: "We are grateful to India for what she has been doing to relieve the distress of this mass of uprooted war-scarred men, women and children who have been forced to throw themselves on her generosity."

Rain, Epidemics

Ahmed added: "I, however,

Sounding a note of caution about the attempts of Gen. Yahya Khan to whip up communal tension like the one he had done between Bengalis and non-Bengali Ahmed said in this, Yahya's aim was to weaken the liberation movement by destroying their unity and to distract the world's attention from the genocide committed by his army in Bangladesh.

But his machinations would not succeed because the people regarded the present struggle as one of every Bengali irrespective of class community or creed, he added.

This report was published in the Patriot, New Delhi on June 14, 1971.



The four leaders (cabinet members of Mujibnagar government): L to R — Syed Nazrul Islam, A H M Quamruzzaman, Tajuddin Ahmed, M Mansoor Ali (Abdus Samad Azad seen behind them)